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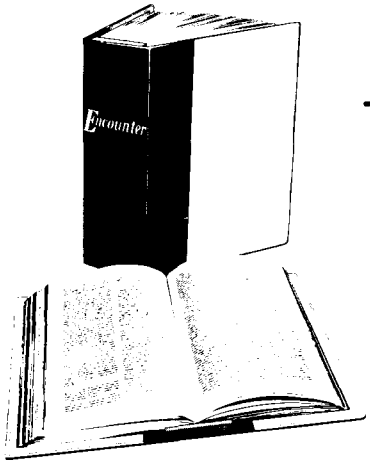

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Penelope Gilliatt

When Are You Going Back?

"HOW IS YOUR SISTER these days?", said the owner of a chefs' outfitting shop in Soho. "You must miss her. She went back the best part of a year ago, as I recall. Are you the older or the younger?"

Juliet said, "I don't have a sister."

The owner said appreciatively, measuring her waist, "She's full of fun, isn't she? You're the spitting image of her. You must get a lot of people saying that. Though she's taller, isn't she. And so where do you both come from? I remember serving her a pair of trousers like the ones you're after now and I think she said Idaho. Or was it Ohio?"

"Cincinnati."

"Geography was never my fiercest point. I imagine she'd be the younger, wouldn't she?" He took her inside-leg measurement and shook his head for some reason.

"No, you see, those were always my trousers and I want another pair exactly the same because I've dribbled paint on them from painting a tub."

"You're saying you're the same person. Well, I can verify that by the trousers now you've explained it. It would be the same blue and white checked trousers with the bagginess taken out."

"Do you always identify people by what they buy?"

Taking this to be a compliment, the owner of the chefs' outfitting shop bowed over Juliet's hand and said, "It's my profession, isn't it?"

"When will you have the trousers ready?"

"It's a big alteration but we'll be ready for you at the end of next week. Give my regards to your sister when you write to Cincinnati. I'll remember that now. It's in my head." He tapped his forehead. "Safest place to keep things."

A man waiting at the counter said, "But she hasn't got a sister, she said."

"Good *morning*, Mr Neal", the owner responded, and then shouted down his back stairway and said, "Help up and in a hurry, we've got the three butcher-boy trousers here inside-leg 36."

Mr Neal, a good-looking man of fifty-odd, said to Juliet as she was leaving the shop at speed, "Don't distress yourself. How long have you been here?"

"A year, in a dump, after a quick exit from Cincinnati to 'New York, New York, it's a beautiful town' ", which she sang.

"What do you do?"

"I'm at the London School of Economics on a grant. The new pants, trousers, are because of doing up the dump."

"I heard. And you like it here in spite of all, and you're about twenty-two?"

"Twenty-three and I'm called Juliet and thank you for catching on." She went quickly into Old Compton Street.

FRIDAY morning. By tube to a lecture at the London School of Economics. Juliet was wearing a spotted muslin dress under a thick coat that her parents had sent her from Cincinnati, thinking that anywhere so far across the Atlantic was likely to be freezing. The coat was far too hot for London, but the fragility of the muslin dress made up the difference. While they were waiting for the L.S.E. lecture to begin, Juliet told an English girl named Harriet about a dream she had had the night before.

"You threw an india-rubber at me", said Juliet. "An eraser."

"I'd never do a thing like that."

"Harriet, I know you wouldn't, but in the dream you did. You also flicked some ink at my dress and it spotted it."

"It's spotted muslin already. Where's the spot?"

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"English people are so literal. It was a dream."

"But you wouldn't have a dream without a reason." Harriet searched Juliet's dress and said, "There's a faded spot here. You've no right to have a dream like that."

"It was followed by a crummy business in a caterers' clothing place."

"What happened?"

"A man kept on sending messages to my sister when it was me he was measuring."

"Was that another dream?"

"It happened, and it's always happening here. People are always saying 'Oh, are you here?' or 'When are you going back?' They don't mean to be rude but do I have to wear a label around my neck? I'm beginning to feel like an ectomorph."

"Good heavens", said Harriet. "You've been here long enough, haven't you? You're not that much of a solipsist."

Talk bogged.

"Say something", said Juliet.

Harriet shook her head. "I've got nothing worth saying at the moment."

Juliet said, "You're turning me into someone garrulous and I'm sure I'm not."

"I'm not up in Freudianism." Harriet went on reading *Language, Truth and Logic*.

Juliet said, "The Lord protect us from high-bred English silences." Wait. "I mean, you let a conversation go off the rails and then there are casualties and people are getting killed because the carriages are on their sides by then and you don't have the slightest idea how to hoist them up again and the hell with it."

Before the afternoon lecture Juliet found on the reading-flap of her chair a bottle of black ink and a note from Harriet saying, "This is to fill in the faded spot or dot. Use a pen, not a brush, or the ink will run. I'm sorry about the dream." In a million years Juliet would not have thought her likely to have so acted on an insight. The note was signed "*Anyway*. H."

ANYWAY. Friday evening. Back to the dump, which was in Soho. Juliet shared it with two English girls: a gym instructress called Victoria, and a personnel manager called Joanna. The evening took the usual course of any other Friday evening.

"Have some sherry", said Victoria to Juliet. "I'm flaked, aren't you?" She looked at her watch and said "No, Jim's coming in a moment to pick me up and they hate people being late for dinner."

"Who's they?"

"The people we're staying with. Up-country."

"Derbyshire as ever?"

"The telephone number's on the kitchen pad but there won't be any calls for me. They know I'm always away for a Friday-to-Monday."

"It sounds forbidding. You always say a Friday-to-Monday but it's only a weekend, isn't it? You work yourself to a standstill on Friday and Monday so it isn't as if you had four days off."

"It's just what we call it", said Victoria. "It's not meant to seem foreign to you." She put her hand on Juliet's arm with a gentleness that Juliet associated with vets. Cincinnati, animals, a hen-house being built by her brother-in-law. "You must come up to us one day", said Victoria. "Let us know when you're free. It's not at all intimidating. It's a frightfully big house so you'd have all the room in the world and there aren't any rules apart from listening for the meal-gongs. It's not that sort of place. You're left alone as much as you want."

"I bet." Juliet said that, and then "Erase. Sorry."

"You really must come up one day. You'd enjoy it. I don't like the thought of you being here alone every Friday-to-Monday. Think about it and I'll put it to our hosts."

There was a honking car outside, and Victoria ran downstairs with her usual leather grip, after leaning out of the window to shout to Jim, "We have got saddle soap up there, haven't we?" Jim shouted up, "Do you want to polish the old grip?"

And there was Joanna still to go.

Juliet said, at the door of Joanna's room, "Is there anything you want? I'm going to do some shopping."

Joanna came out, looking vivid, with a bundle under her arm that she regularly pretended to be a load of food though both Victoria and Juliet knew that it was her clothes and books for the weekend at her boy-friend's studio. The silence about his name and her whereabouts had become shyly insisted upon for so long that even her flat-sharers observed the code.

Kicking the code, Juliet said, "To be

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practical, so what's his name?"

"Henry", said Joanna. "I'm just taking him some salami."

"Soho being rampant with salami, alive and kicking with Chinese bean sprouts, and would you both like to come and have dinner here with me tomorrow night?"

"I'd have to ring you. He may have fixed something."

"You don't have to fix salami. There's nothing to be done about salami. You just have it."

"One can put it in a cassoulet. When I said fixed something I meant he may have arranged something. He often does. For Saturday night. He's a bit difficult about weekends. Could you and I have pizza together on Monday night? I know Victoria's got people coming and we'd be in the way."

"You're sure you're free?"

"I've never heard you use sarcasm."

"It was an attempt to be funny."

"Yes." Joanna took her bundle from under the smock she was wearing and smelt it.

"Garlic. Henry doesn't like garlic much because of his ulcer."

"Salami *is* garlic. *Denotes* garlic. Anyway that's all clothes and books and notebooks."

Joanna looked bruised and said, "Honestly, there is some salami in here, though not all, I admit that, and I've found a place that does it with much less garlic than anywhere else so all one can do is hope. We'll see each other on Monday at seven and go out at once because it's not right this business of lurking when one of us is using the kitchen."

"I don't understand why we don't get asked."

"I know, but Victoria wouldn't see it that way. This way you've got the place to yourself all weekend."

"And I've got the paint-stripper for the tub so I've that to do."

On Saturday Juliet spent four hours in the empty bath patiently stripping yellowed paint off the original porcelain. The smell of the paint-stripper was noxious.

Harriet rang, and asked her to a cocktail party that evening.

"I'm in an old pair of chef's pants because I'm stripping the bath and can't make it but thank you a lot", she said.

"How are you doing it? The bath."

"By sitting in it."

"Why aren't your flat-sharers doing it with you?"

"They're away for the weekend."

"Do you want me to come over?"

"Two of us in a tub already guaranteed to burn your skin off?"

"You shouldn't be left alone in a bath."

ANYWAY. Tomorrow was a Sunday. Of course, Juliet woke unusually early on this day to be rid of. She made coffee. Her Soho street was full of shops selling coffee beans out of huge sacks: beans that you were encouraged to run your hands through and to smell before you bought. She did some necessary work, found it engrossing for five hours, and then got out her address book and rang everyone she knew, including Harriet. No one was in. "One's forefinger gets fatigued with dialling. Also one's mind", she said to herself. It was a day and evening nearly impossible to get through, though reading Jane Austen helped. That grace of moral order.

EARLY ON MONDAY morning, she telephoned Harriet to ask her if she would choose some people to come to dinner far ahead in the Soho flat, and if she would do it now, before they were likely to have gone to work. Harriet did some quick telephoning and rang back. Dinner the Thursday after next. Married couples, all of them. "People do seem to get booked up. These particular people are more interesting than nice, if you know what I mean. I could have a look for an extra man for you at the L.S.E.", said Harriet; but Juliet said, "I'd be getting up and down with cooking and plates, and anyway who cares about *placement* now?" The phrase "extra man" rang in her head.

She cooked cassoulet, new to the peculiar ingredients ("pig's knuckle, or trotter if unavailable, a quarter of a goose"...). The butcher knew what she wanted. The one she liked best had a particularly beautiful shop window, with crowns of delicate lamb cutlets dressed in chefs' frilled caps of miniature size. The cuts of meat were arranged on bright green artificial grass. She had never seen grass like this except in Hollywood. She thought of Beverly Hills, and the huge rolls of such stuff that were used for celebrities' dinner parties to protect the real grass.

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She also made taramasalata. Her co-habitants in the flat helped with setting the table. They had asked their own boy-friends. Henry in person at last. Victoria's had brought his guitar. Juliet said to him "Would you mind a lot if you played the piano instead? There's one in the bedroom. Or maybe you don't play the piano."

"It would mean cutting my nails. I need my nails for my guitar." The nails were as long as a mandarin's.

"Yes, you'd regret it", said Juliet.

"Juliet's against regret", said Victoria, a ready translator of the clear.

"There's bound to be somebody else who can play a piano", said Juliet. "I suppose I even could, in spite of the cassoulet. It's only that we've had such a heap of guitar music at home since protest songs, and people sit on the floor in jeans, and there isn't much room for sitting on the floor here with three sofas in the room. Also, no one listening to guitar songs knows when they're going to stop. Whereas with a piano you do."

Some of the people who came, at helpful Harriet's suggestion, were politicians; some literary editors; some photographers; one a titled writer of an expensive and inept cookery book illustrated with witty drawings of disaster in the kitchen with *noblesse oblige* going on in the drawing-room. A man who had been identified only as "Could-we-bring-somebody" was introduced namelessly as "This-is-who-we-meant." He was the Mr Neal of the chefs' trousers encounter. Both he and Juliet remembered very well indeed. He came with her into the kitchen, which was as small as a broom cupboard.

"Something in the oven smells splendid. What is it?"

"Cassoulet. What are you called before Neal?"

"Nick. It's nice of you to have me. What can I do?"

"Remember for me where people are sitting. I've written it out on my hand." She showed him the palm of her hand with a table plan and initials on it in ink.

He studied the palm as if he were telling her fortune. Realising what he must look as if he were doing, he said, nodding to the drawing-room-cum-dining-room, "Most of the people here aren't exactly life-lines." He soaped off the ink after he had convinced her that the two of them had safely committed the drawing to memory. She had put him on her right, but he said that the shadow minister present had to be on her right. So Nick, that source of help, was to be far away.

"I ALWAYS wonder how long one has to soak real haricots", said an antique dealer named Clara in a tenth-hand Victorian evening dress that, as she explained loudly to no one in particular, had cost her a year's salary. Leaving no space for an answer, she said, "If it hadn't been for Christopher, who's getting thinner and thinner on his yoghourt. . . . Sorry. Lost my way. Oh yes, if it hadn't been for Christopher living near his flea-market I'd never have found it. Christopher has pull in lace."

"Twenty-four hours", said Juliet to Clara.

"What?" said Clara.

"The beans."

"Must have been awake all night", said a highly-mooted Tory M.P. called Bertie.

"They don't need watching", said Juliet. But Bertie had the habit of making statements rather than asking questions, and he had already gone on to ask the table at large if anyone knew whether Piggy was still footing it in Nuristan.

"No", said a literary editor called, it seemed, Chips, "but Bimbie's still out there."

The wives, called Emma (two), Pit-Pony, Becca, and Caroline (two), listened carefully to their husbands and spoke across everyone willy-nilly about a distinguished couple from South Africa who had been under house-arrest for five years. At last, mention of people who Juliet knew about. She tried to get a word in about their pamphlets and the wife's novels.

"One *must* read something she's done", said Clara. "One hears about her books all the time."

"They do loom", said Bertie.

The witty artist drew a witty drawing on the back of his bread-and-butter plate. The ink would come off the plate, but not the butter now on the tablecloth, Juliet thought. Then the mooted young politician spilt his glass of red wine.

"Salt", said Clara.

"No", said the politician. "That turns it black immediately. One trick. Foolproof. Pour some very *good* claret on it at once, and then wait three seconds and put at least half a bottle

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of Sauterne on it. Chemical reaction. It's got to be frightfully *good* Sauterne. I've seen it work even on Aubusson carpets. I dare say it's because of the age of the claret and then the counter-reaction of the sugar in the Sauterne."

Equipped only with Chianti, it seemed to Juliet that it was going to be cheaper to buy a new tablecloth. The incident anyway passed in an instant, and only Nick looked at the cloth and then firmly got up and put soap and water on the mess.

"One still misses old Fruity", Bertie said out of the blue.

FOR A MOMENT even Harriet forgot his invariable freedom from context and looked for fruit for him in the kitchen. This in spite of the Brie and salad on the table. And then she remembered that a man called Fruity had been Bertie's best friend who had died two years ago of an undiagnosed illness in the midst of writing what had promised to be an innovative book.

Bertie, Fruity, Bimbie, Piggy, Pit-Pony. "It's all *names*", Juliet shouted suddenly and very fast, crying; "I mean, I know they're your friends, but I don't even seem to get time to ask you about them." She ran down the stairs and out into the street for a few moments. No one noticed except Nick. When she came back she had mustered herself and said, so low that people at last attended: "Look, I know I'm American, and I don't expect you to have heard of Eudora Welty or Peter Fonda even, but there must be something English we could all talk about. Or some*one*, if that's easier. Inigo Jones? Sickert?" No luck. "Britten?"

"Oh, you mean the E.E.C.", said the mooted politician. "One doesn't think of it as Britain any longer."

"She means Benjamin Britten, I think", said Nick.

Pit-Pony leant over for some Brie. Juliet asked her about her name. "It's because the family comes from rather near the mines, the coal-mines, and I used to go to the cottages of the miners' wives who worked in the house because they let me do things more than the family, and often I'd stay with them overnight." She paused, and couldn't go on with the cheese. "It's very bad up there now. We don't know much down South. I wish people in London wouldn't call me Pit-Pony. Eliza's a perfectly good name up there. Do you feel a bit lost here, Juliet?"

Taking a cue of manners, as he saw it, the literary editor leant forward to Juliet and said "When are you going back?"

"She's here", said Nick. "Why do English people always ask that?"

"Why why?"

"Why what?"

"Why do you ask why?" said the literary editor.

"Bound to make anyone feel they've got no place here, isn't it?" said Nick. "Wouldn't it be more interesting to find out why she came?"

"Because of the L.S.E.", said Juliet, "and Shakespeare and Jane Austen and Harriet Martineau and the way English people love Nelson, and things." She looked quickly at Nick. "And other things."

"You haven't told us about the L.S.E. An exchange, was it?" said the shadow minister.

"No. I did it on my own." Ferocity, unusual in her. "And, apart from Shakespeare, I suppose Pope, Dryden, Swift, Chaucer, A. J. Ayer, Bertrand Russell, Purcell, the Beatles, as Harriet knows."

Nick stayed with her and helped with the washing up. Then he took her to his flat in Devonshire Street. For days they played truant and saw only each other, eating sardines or fried bread and tomatoes, walking in Regent's Park, looking at old bookshops, reading in bed.

"What exactly do you do?" she asked, after a couple of days spent mostly in the bedroom.

"Not much."

"But what exactly?"

"I was a waiter in Marylebone Lane, but I'll have got the sack by now for being absent without telephoning. I used to be a doctor but now I'm doing research. Being a waiter gives you time for thinking." "That's what you mostly do?" she said, herself thinking, and then, "Could I be on the other side of the bed for a while?"

She climbed over him. He said, "Or I suppose it might be called thinking about thinking. I mostly keep a notebook and put things down that might lead somewhere one day. Also I'm learning electroencephalography. I'm teaching myself. I've got a place in a lab at hospital. Just being a G.P. didn't seem very adventurous as my age, so I chucked it at 50."

"You talked about Hamlet in your sleep last night. I couldn't quite make it out."

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"I put it down, whatever it was." His notebook was now on her side of the bed. "Look for it if you like. It's one but the last. It's only a note." She read, "Young man ransacking his mother for mislaid birthright of innocence. Magnanimous play." After that there was a note about electronics that she couldn't decipher.

JULIET DREAMT of New York: of the noises of sirens, and car-horns, and transistor radios held to the ears of pedestrians: and of Central Park concerts where she had often stood in line since early in the morning with her bike and a picnic to hear some great singer in the evening from a place on the grass near enough to escape the hubbub of the streets alongside. She woke abruptly, waking Nick, and said, "I said 'waiting in line' in my sleep."

"I didn't hear it. Why does it matter?"

"It should be queueing."

"Only here. You were in New York in your head. Either's all right. It depends who you are."

"Not where you are?"

"Both people understand both sorts of English, unless they're duffers."

Nick went to work at the restaurant at eleven next morning, hoping that his job would re-offer itself. Juliet read all day, which was her way of going to ground, and forgot about lunch. The telephone rang. She had the common odd instinct, just before picking up the receiver, about who the call was from and that it was for her. So she said "Nicholas Jefferson residence here."

"And this is Nick's Diner speaking and would you like to come and have a rather nice dirt-cheap load of abroad dinner at six o'clock? The restaurant is Pakistani and we'll have to eat in the kitchen. The waiters wait on each other." He gave her the address. He gave her a map. He made her draw it for herself over the telephone. As though in readiness for a long foray, she put on espadrilles. Following the map, which she had again drawn on her hand just as she had the seating of people to dinner, she set off. Many doctors' plates in brightly polished brass. A soldiers' hospital named after Edward VII. In three minutes she had reached the restaurant. Nick being the man he was, he had not wanted her to wait and was waiting there himself at the door.

They had tandoori chicken. The chicken was hot, the kitchen very hot, the prices very cheap. Many of the people there, mostly men, were reading as they ate. Languages got mixed in her ears. The voices she had been reading: Flannery O'Connor, Burke, Beckett; and the voices she was hearing: Nick's, her own, Pakistanis', waiters' answering dinner orders in languages she couldn't understand or sometimes even place. Her own accent she found imprecise and slurred but Nick understood it well enough. Again, he saw where her attention lay, and he explained that a lot of young foreign doctors worked here when they weren't on call.

"Doctors in America earn a fortune."

"Not here. Not if they're working in their own time to be specialists. Or if they're juniors on the N.H.S."

"I thought the N.H.S. was going downhill."

"Most people think that about everything about England, including a lot of English people and including some ex-left-wing waiters who've made a pile and taken to hunting. But some of them get it right. One who's got it dead right has been working so hard that he's just had a nervous breakdown."

"Is he in a clinic?"

"No, he's working. He's got a job to do."

"Doesn't he need help?"

"What does that mean?"

"Psychotherapy?"

"Help doesn't mean that in England."

"Then what?"

He went through a few of his notions of help. Friends. Company. Books. Work, obviously. Humour. Sense of ancestry. He thought even of saying "Mercy", but put that aside and instead paid the bill, which turned out to be a matter of subtracting the amount from his wages. Juliet listened to the Tower of Babel sounds in the kitchen. He said, "This is what the big English cities are like now. Swinging London had always been a magazine invention. Gave rise to a great many very bad pizza places and a great many W.1. houses turned into gambling joints. W.1. is what abroad calls Mayfair. And estate agents, of course. There's a Czech playwright eating over there. He speaks English but he won't write in it. He says he can't. Terrible thing, for a writer to be plundered of his language. He signed the Civil Rights manifesto. That's why he limps. The police shot him as he was escaping but they only got his ankle. It's a very bad fracture."

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Nick went into the dining-room to work. She had the spare key to his flat. She did some unnoticeable housework for him, thinking to be useful. She had asked him again about whether she might read his notebook and, being an unfretful man, he had said, "Of course. They're not journals."

All the same, she waited until he came back, and then she read in another room after he had fallen asleep. One passage struck her because she had had no hint of the part of his mind that would have prompted it. A note about a man in the time of the Gospels, and his function in that society being accessory to his character, and society something he could control. "Now a man is an annexe of his social function and there's nothing he can do when the bias of his character and the edicts of his job happen to conflict." And immediately after that, a note about her in the caterers' shop. About the clothes she wore, and then an exact report of the words, and then "Edicts of her undertaking v. instinct to quit?"

SHE THOUGHT about Nick: the way he had listened to things in Soho, the way he worked at the restaurant. She went to sleep in the room where she had been reading and dreamt all over again, word by word, the ungentle dinner party in Soho. Jumping awake from thirst after that was over, she had a drink of water and went immediately to sleep again until she was wakened by the noise of Nick shouting. She went fast into the bedroom and shook him awake. "You were having a nightmare."

"Was I talking in my sleep?"

"Screaming."

"No way to lead a platoon", he said, still in the nightmare. "Was it in the Ardennes?"

"I don't know."

"A tank's blowing up there. It's in flames. Six men inside. I can't see. My eyelids are too hot. Every time I run back to get one of the men out it gets worse."

"Sit up. You're still in the dream." She got him some hot broth because he kept saying, "Hot sweet tea."

"It's a *dream*." She thought of slapping his face, but it seemed quite the wrong thing to do. "It's not as though you're hysterical", she said, explaining out loud without noticing.

"One gave them hot sweet tea for shock", he said. "It was all they wanted. There was one of them I couldn't get out." At least he had moved into the past tense. He went suddenly to sleep and she thought it best to stay this time. She overslept, of course, to his scorn. He brought her breakfast in bed. "You were talking in your sleep", he told her. Not the moment to bring up the Ardennes, she said to herself. Out loud, "What about?"

"New York. You do miss the sticks and stones of New York, don't you?"

"Not in Devonshire Street. I thought eggs were short here. You've given me a boiled egg."

"They're not short now. That was in the war. Forty years ago. I'm very old for you."

"Old to be a *waiter*, perhaps, but not a waiter learning electroencephalography."

"Old to be an extra man."

"Some phrase."

"Worse things. What exactly were you dreaming about?"

"That awful party."

"England isn't all like that. You won't skedaddle, will you? I thought I'd go into the lab today. I think I may have left the steriliser on."

She bought food on the way back from the L.S.E., and a kaftan, and started barbecueing steak on the toasting grill of his gas cooker as soon as she heard his key in the door. The place immediately reeked. She opened the windows and went back to the stove. He yelled at her, turned off the stove, and shouted, "Turn back those ridiculous sleeves, you idiot. You can't do a cook-out in a kimono. You might have been a cinder."

"It's not a cook-out, it's a cook-in. This isn't the first time I've cooked steak. And there's ratatouille."

"Garlic makes me sick."

The steak cooled. They went to bed without dinner. She kept the ratatouille in the fridge, hoping for improvements in appetite. That night she had violent dreams about petrol thrown on to flames: because of the row, the flaming steak, the flaming tank. Next morning it seemed that he had had much the same dream. Things healed. They had the cold steak for lunch. "The ratatouille's still delicate ground", she said.

"Yup."

"Do you want to chuck it out?"

"Not on your life."

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HE WORKED in a notebook and then among his long charts of electroencephalograms. She wrote letters to America. He said suddenly from the floor; "When I was on the tube yesterday a woman said her doctor had told her that her liver was on a knife-edge. That was how I felt about the ratatouille. But I shouldn't have shouted at you. I'm sorry."

"Well, you were in a war."

"I had a very easy war."

"I've heard a lot of Englishmen like you say that."

He thought and then gave a barking sort of laugh.

"What was that about?" said Juliet.

"My sister. She was the private secretary to somebody top-secret. She was the ideal private secretary because the most fascinating things went right over her head. She'd be reading women's magazines and serials and horoscopes, you see, between using her high speeds. So you can safely ask her about the most confidential decisions and she hasn't an idea what you're trying to find out. And so you could say that women's magazines won the war for us."

"At that dinner party, did you notice how people much too young to remember the war kept on saying how American food parcels kept Britain going?"

"There are pockets of English people who are condescending to America."

"But not your restaurant. There were a lot of very young American students there and they knew more about the Czechs than I do. They'd been there."

"I've been to America twice, actually. The Medical Research Council helped. Oh, by the way, I think I may have left the steriliser on." She had begun to recognise this as a ploy. He said, "As it's a Saturday, we wouldn't be disturbing anyone if you came in with me. Would you like that?"

As if he were giving her a treat, he told her in the lab a little about electromyography. "It's a matter of sinking needles into the right place, basically." He laid himself down on the examination couch and told her to watch for what happened on something that looked much like a television screen. Green waves. She turned round, and shouted to him to stop, please.

"I thought you'd be interested. It doesn't hurt at all. I know what I'm doing." But he got off the examination couch. Juliet, feeling ashamed, took Nick to see a revival of a poor film called *Green Slime* because the title had always interested her. On the way out, he said, "We might go back to America for a while together, yes?" Having a careful mind, he added, "Before coming back, of course."

Letter-Writing

So now she pauses. Nothing more will come.
And looks across the sodden field to where
a tractor turns the earth and seagulls skirl
and circle in the grey, unsettled air.

Restlessness. Distress. But it's true: the less
she thinks about it, the better she writes;
like verse composed impromptu and complete
in bed on candle-lighted winter nights.

While this is lifeless, listless, limp. "Poor soul.
I'm glad he didn't suffer. Joan, my dear,
if you should feel the need to get away . . .".
The farmers are preparing for the year;

the soil exhales the vapours of the deaths
where growth originates. "I'd like to see
Venice again. We could go together.
Maybe in May a week in Sicily."

Michael Hulse

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If I have a Fault

"If I have a fault. . ." he exclaims; and you think he'll own
He's a thief or a forger of contracts.
Instead he declares a disastrous craving to give.
"Any rogue in a fix can count on me for a loan.
I'm too impulsive!"

"If I have a fault. . ." she begins; and you think she'll end
With possessiveness, or a mania
For mailing anonymous libels. Instead she berates
Herself, she's too open, "simply cannot pretend"
To like people she hates.

"If we have a fault. . ." they confide; and you wait to share
Admissions of cruelty, spite, betrayal,
Or how they ruined their children. Instead they sigh,
"How lazy we are. Insulted, how little we care.
How ineptly we lie."

Endearing foibles, even virtues in foibles' dress,
They will grant; never anything nasty.
Hypocrite birds! What fun it is to put salt
On their tails! A weakness I have to confess,
If I have a fault. . . .

Michael Burn

Integration

It is only through vertical integration
that you can have a dominant position
in the relevant market, says a friend
who is doing a paper
on the shelf-life of the banana.
I try to absorb this piece of information,
but the sun, pouring in through the window,
will not brook the competition.
It insists on spilling its gold across the carpet,
as if to remind that this is England,

where an August day like this
is so obviously a phenomenal deviation
from that wet and windy norm
poets and sun-seeking lovers bewail.
But I am not of their kind,
have grown up anticipating every storm
in my own bedevilled country,
spent a generation escaping into the mountains,
with their mist, and rain, and hail.
So when my friend elaborates, I listen.

Kaleem Omar

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GEORGE URBAN

A Long Conversation with Dr Zbigniew Brzezinski

'The Perils of Foreign Policy'

PRESIDENT CARTER (*dejected, reading the newspapers on the day after the Reagan electoral victory*): **"I suppose I'd have been a better President if I had followed Brzezinski's advice more often. . . ."**

A VISITOR IN THE OVAL OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE (*November 1980*)

HAVING, *somewhat recklessly, taken the title of Alexis de Tocqueville's book "Democracy in America" for our opening theme, I suggest we look at the kind of lessons which an historian with four years of total immersion in American power would draw from his experiences.*

I suspect your story in government is unique because no National Security Adviser, or Secretary of State for that matter, played a comparable role in educating his President before the latter was elected to office, and none—not even Henry Kissinger—brought to his job a comparable knowledge of Communist systems and ideologies. And none has been more roundly abused.

Your critics have been greatly exercised by the Carter Administration's "failure to pursue a consistent foreign policy." Can **any** *American Administration, in the last quarter of the 20th century, pursue a straight course in foreign affairs?*

BRZEZINSKI: Let me, first, make a few general comments. My overwhelming observation from the experience of the last four years is that history is neither the product of design nor of conspiracy but is rather the reflection of continuing chaos. Seen from the outside, decisions may often seem clear and consciously formulated; interrelations between governments may seem to be the products of deliberately crafted, even if often conflicting, policies.

But one learns, in fact, that so much of what happens—not only in the US Government, but in foreign governments too (and one cannot help observing these as one has to deal with them at close hand)—is the product of chaotic conditions and a great deal of personal struggle and ambiguity. Sometimes you will find agreement on means but fundamental disagreement on ends; sometimes agreement on ends but disagreement on means. All this reinforces the impression of contingency and uncertainty which is inherent in the human condition and which is only magnified by the scale and intensity of the power one wields.

To come to your specific point concerning *consistency*, I would balk at the word itself. I do not think the question is whether the Carter Administration has pursued a consistent foreign policy, because I would strongly argue that by and large we did (even though I would not put great value on a type of consistency that excludes flexibility in the light of changed circumstances). The word we have to focus on is complexity. The question I find meaningful is not whether it is possible to pursue a consistent policy, but whether it is possible for a democracy to pursue a *complex* policy.

Here I do have some concerns. A democracy as large as the American, dominated to the extent to which it is by the mass-media, tends to be particularly vulnerable to simple-minded generalisations and, more particularly, simple-minded dichotomies of the *either/or* character. This is especially true of television. It is very difficult for an average American newspaperman to present the proposition that, in dealing with the Soviet Union, the US has to be firm, consistent and competitive on the one hand—relying on, and using, power—while remaining, at the same time, cooperative, accommodating and willing to export its ideals through the encouragement of evolutionary processes throughout the world. For the average American newspaperman, it has to be one or the other. For example, I was scourged by journalists like Joseph Kraft, in the first two years of this Administration, for arguing that we should be tougher in reacting to Soviet-sponsored Cuban military activity in Africa while supporting SALT. (I was described as a Polish-born Russophobe.) But

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lately Kraft has moved to insisting that we should actively oppose the Soviets on all fronts. (Who knows, maybe he has Polish ancestry, too?)

The real challenge is how to structure a policy that is genuinely responsive to global complexities. This applies not only to East-West relations; the dilemma concerns our relationship with the Third World too. We tend, as a country, to oscillate. Andrew Young expresses one extreme—a great and articulate inclination to accede to the wishes of the Third World. I suspect his successor in the Reagan Administration, Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, will be going to go to the other extreme in the United Nations.

—Aren't we faced with a somewhat more general dilemma—the inability, that is, of the vast majority of even reasonably educated people to assimilate anything more sophisticated than do/don't, yes/no types of signals? One cannot wholly blame this on simple-mindedness. The world of practical action does resist complexity. There is in your own perception of the contemporary world a very appealing creative tension between bipolarity and multipolarity—between power-politics and "planetary humanism"; between the power-consciousness of the older generation, and the international morality of the young. But when this intellectually appealing tension gets put into practice through the agencies of Government, it tends to end up in muddle. Isn't there a case for a certain benign simplification as a necessary method of harnessing public support to policies that are, and must necessarily be, impenetrable to the public? And can we, then, put all the blame on newsmen whose craft is as ill-equipped to respond to complexity as is their readership?

BRZEZINSKI: The question, then, is: what should be accommodated? Should policy accommodate itself to simplicity, or simplicity be educated to a certain level of sophistication? It is a real dilemma. It is a dilemma which a relatively isolated and secure democracy (such as the one we had here before World War II) could well afford to ignore. But an America that is deeply involved in the world can either impose on the world, through its economic preponderance and power, a simple scheme—as was the case in the 1950s when all issues were ultimately reduced to that of "fighting Communism"—or learn to adjust in a more nuanced and sophisticated manner to a world it can no longer dominate but from which it cannot, and should not, disengage.

Take the Middle East as an example. Can we reasonably reduce the whole problem in the Middle East exclusively to price rises of OPEC oil, or exclusively to the question of Israeli security, or to that of Soviet intrusion?

We have a moral obligation to Israel which we must respect if we are to be true to our fundamental values as a civilisation—particularly so in view of what happened to the Jewish people in World War II. At the same time we have important security interests in the Middle East which require good relations with the Arabs. We will not sacrifice Israel to oil. But neither should we sacrifice American interests to Israeli territorial aspirations. To strike a balance between the two is extraordinarily difficult. It is especially difficult in a democracy in which (as I have said) the mass-media tend either to sensationalise or oversimplify complex issues.

I. Of Advice & Advisers

IT IS ONE THING—or so it seems to me—to recognise the "complexity" of the modern world, and another to stress it so much in policy-formulating contexts as to make complexity self-debilitating. I have made a note for myself of the great frequency with which words like "complex", "chaotic", "anarchic" and similar expressions of impending doom occur in your writings and speeches. You talk of a "complex and changing world"; of "psychic instability"; of the "simplicities of the Cold War versus the confused, turbulent, perplexing state of global affairs"; of a new era for which we lack "the conceptual tools of analysis"; of "a series of frustrated outbreaks in the context of intense but rapidly changing radical beliefs"; of a "world-wide disintegration of social and political order"; of "a planetary fragmentation of peoples and states"; of a "world on the eve of a transformation more dramatic than the French and Bolshevik revolutions"—and the like. May I suggest that all this is fine as a matter of political diagnosis, but runs the risk of being self-defeating if it is offered as a remedy as well. My impression is that policy-makers (as distinct from policy-analysts) have to travel light. The complexity of their task cannot save them the trouble of stripping complicated issues down to the bone—which is not to say that I would want my political leader to be one of Jacob Burckhardt's "simplificateurs terribles." . . .

BRZEZINSKI: If the issues are black-and-white, the answer is black-and-white too. The problem, however, is that most issues in the real world are neither black nor white but very subtly shaded variants of grey. This is where the difficulty of making the right choice arises, and this is where an even greater difficulty arises, namely how to explain to your country what you are doing so that you can mobilise support. And here, we in the Carter Administration did not do well enough. The President was disinclined to make formal and comprehensive speeches. He was superb in direct, personal interviews; but these do not generally give one the opportunity to lay out one's philosophy.

Secretary of State Vance had various strong qualities, but an inclination to engage in what might be called a sustained effort to educate the American public was not among them. Muskie tried to do some of that, but it was too late in the game. To some extent *I* was pushed into that role, but my own ability to try to explain what we were doing

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was limited by the fact that the very assumption of the role was controversial, not to speak of the circumstance that my emphasis on "the need to restore American power in the world" was strongly opposed by some sectors of the bureaucracy, more specifically by some people who came into the bureaucracy from the Senator McGovern wing of the Democratic Party. They rejected the whole concept of power, and attacked me for my advocacy of a more assertive foreign policy.

I do believe that we did perform adequately on the level of decision-making. Over and over again the President made the right decisions—be it Panama, Central America, the Middle East, Israel and the Arabs, or the Chinese. But we failed to some extent to explain all this to the public and to mobilise popular support.

—The execution of policy is, in the final analysis, in the hands of bureaucrats, and these are men whose mentality equips them well enough for putting into effect the **yes/no** *type of decision, but not so well for the execution of a complex vision in which every argument "on the one hand" is balanced, if not countermanded, by some argument "on the other." I would not be surprised if baffled desk officers in the State Department were sometimes set wondering whether Presidential policies offered* **solutions** *to this or that problem, or whether the President was not really part of the problem himself.*

BRZEZINSKI: Let us not confuse two separate issues. Bureaucracies do not respond to visions; they respond to clear-cut directives. To the extent that this was possible we did issue such directives. One of the reasons why I was resented was that my job was to "crack the whip" on behalf of the President.

"Philosopher-king? 'Grand Vizier' may be closer to the mark. . . ."

—But take, for example, your dichotomy between "planetary humanism" and "global consciousness" on the one hand, and "power-realism" on the other. You tended to give both more or less equal emphasis in your and the President's various articulations; and I imagine your internal directives to various executors and interpreters of US policy were couched in a similar vein. How can an American Ambassador at the UN, for example, be both an advocate of American power and a sympathetic listener to the Third World's fulminations against the use of American power?

BRZEZINSKI: It is just a fact of political life that any effort to translate a universal idea (especially if this carries provocative overtones) into a policy runs into enormous practical difficulties. For one thing, your own persuasion may not be shared by others. For another, your attempt to translate your broad perspective into policy recommendations may be contested either for substantive reasons, or by institutional, sectional, and personal interests. It is much easier, in a sense, to be a philosopher-king than to be a philosopher-activist.

I am not saying I am a philosopher—that would be too presumptuous—but I do entertain certain broad concepts which have, you might say, a philosophical derivation. It was not easy to shape these into actual policies in a pluralistic Administration in which, although some of my views were shared by colleagues—particularly those regarding the Third World and the political awakening of the submerged majority of mankind—others (as for example my view of the importance of American power) were not so shared. That was the dilemma facing me throughout our four years in office.

I was booed by some delegates at the Democratic National Convention (mostly from Massachusetts and from Pennsylvania) because certain segments of the Party found my emphasis on the need to use US power indigestible. Still, I am persuaded that if the Democratic Party is to remain a force relevant to the conditions of the 1980s, it must accept the fact that power remains a significant facet of world affairs, and American self-abstention can only contribute to greater instability and growing conflict, and is thus ultimately immoral too.

I had to struggle against the intellectual and emotional legacy of the Vietnamese war and its impact on a whole generation of American policy-makers. Many of these were so traumatised by Viet Nam that any mention of the American use of force would send almost visible shivers down their spines.

—The Reagan Administration appears to have every intention of removing these people from their positions. . . .

BRZEZINSKI: It has already done so—which I really regret because they will now be available for comment in the mass-media—

YOU HAVE SPOKEN *of "philosopher-kings." This office we are sitting in is the nearest thing in modern times to that of a philosopher-king—*

BRZEZINSKI: I'm not sure whether that is the best name for it—"grand vizier" may be closer to the mark.

—Do you feel that the function of an ideological "grand vizier" as an aid to the US President is really called for?

BRZEZINSKI: It is absolutely essential. Nixon's foreign policy without Kissinger would not have been anything like as successful as, in some ways, it was (although Nixon has to be given greater credit for being the actual originator of many of his

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Administration's strategic initiatives than he is generally given). And I suspect I may have contributed some of the intellectual framework and some of the innovative impulses for the Carter Administration's foreign policy, if I may be so bold as to say so.

When I came to Washington there was widespread speculation—and I can speak about this now without generating suspicion of ulterior motives—that I wanted to be Secretary of State. I never wanted to be Secretary of State. I did want—and I don't mind admitting it—to be what I was, because I thought that, given my talents and limitations, this was the place where I could be most active. I wanted to be in a position where I would direct the coordination of our national security policy for the President—the integration of defence, intelligence and diplomacy into some meaningful whole. Also, I wanted to head the President's Think-Tank. I wanted to be a source of fresh thinking for him, because I strongly believed that, under a creative, intelligent, ambitious and assertive individual like Jimmy Carter, the Presidency would be the point of departure for all national policy. And I was given that post. It was, in fact, that of a "grand vizier" with its many rewards and frustrations.

—There is a great deal of talk now in Washington that under the Reagan Administration the National Security Adviser's job will be downgraded to that of a "staffer" and the competition between him and the Secretary of State eliminated. This strikes me as a little fanciful, for under five Presidents the post acquired more and more prestige and has, by now, become functionally almost indispensable. Henry Kissinger said **your** *job should be downgraded when you were appointed—do* **you** *say that Richard Allen's job should be taken down a peg or two?*

BRZEZINSKI: No, I do not. The post has acquired great importance, not because some exceptionally gifted individuals held it in the last 20 or so years (that, of course, may have helped), but because the thrust of world events did two things: *first*, they made the President the centre of all decision-making. He could no longer delegate foreign policy to a Secretary of State. The close interconnection between domestic policy and foreign affairs made it unavoidable for the President to be immediately and deeply involved in both. *Second*, the connection between foreign policy and defence matters creates clusters of "security dilemmas" which have to be coordinated. Try to deal with complex international problems of the sort we face today—the Persian Gulf, for example: the Defence Department will want to deal with it in one way; State in another. Neither will sufficiently trust its rival to coordinate the two on its own. There has to be someone next to the President to do so. Last, and most important, a modern President does not want to be a prisoner of Departmental briefs. He will want to have someone close to him against whom he can, in the privacy of the White House, test his ideas and recommendations. Given an *active* President (which Mr Reagan may not want to be), this psychological dimension is all-important.

II. Is There a New Dimension?

WE HAVE BEEN talking about the intractability of many of the issues that exercise modern governments, and the ordinary citizen's inability or unwillingness to tangle with them. Isn't this touching on the viability of democracy itself? Democracy assumes that issues of public policy are simple enough to be accessible to the mind of a man of common sense—accessible enough, in any case, for him to form an opinion. This was true of the ancient Greek city-states. Americans, in their heart of hearts, yearn for a similarly direct and personalised type of politics, forgetting that the size of their country and the complexity of the modern world make it all but impossible to attain. And as simplicity is no longer possible, a rather brutal simplification is the ordinary citizen's only means of getting some purchase on the problems he is asked to understand and ultimately vote on. We saw, for example, how the Kissingerian notion of Détente was (largely through Kissinger's own failure to explain it) mistakenly interpreted, suggesting even hearty friendship with the Soviet Union. I would contend that the complex ideas incorporated in the Carter Administration's diagnosis of the world in the 1980s were similarly inaccessible to the mind of the average American. The question appears to be: Is populist democracy of the American sort adequate to the tasks of modern government?

BRZEZINSKI: I agree—but what, then, are the alternatives? Demagogy? That is cheap, and is destructive of democracy; and President Carter was not a demagogue. Translation of the world into black-and-white categories? In political terms that would mean ending up with a policy either like Senator McGovern's at one extreme, or the Nixon–Kissinger emphasis on power alone at the other. The fact of the matter is that we are not living in the 1950s when you could plausibly say that "Stalinism" was the principal enemy and focus on that; or in the 1940s when you could say that "Hitlerism" was the principal enemy and focus on *that*.

"Are we interested in the analysis of some new perspective, shedding light on some complicated trend, defining roles in a changing world? No. Our news-obsessed mass-media want simple **either/or** *presentations of great complex issues. They want 'good guys' vs. 'bad guys', 'hawks' vs. 'doves', personal gossip, power-plays. . . ."*

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There is, I'm afraid, no easy remedy to the condition you have described. No single aspirin will cure the headaches of democracy. Education would certainly be one important point of departure, but I would press for the education not only of the public but also of the men who run and write for our mass-media. They will have to be taught the habit of analysing and thinking-through the meaning of events, and some willingness to engage in the difficult intellectual effort to understand and convey nuances.

I don't know whether in other languages journalists are described as "*newsmen*"—they are in American English. In the United States to report on events is to report the "news." I would frequently give speeches or make statements of an analytical kind which would deal with some of the questions you and I are talking about. Invariably, in briefing our newsmen, I or my colleagues would be asked: "What's new in it?" And if you told them: "Well, this is an attempt to explain the meaning of America's position in the world—to emphasise a number of continuing themes underlying American foreign policy", they would ignore it.

In May 1980 the President made an important speech in Philadelphia. In it he tried to outline his broad priorities, put in a wider context what he was doing in foreign affairs, and indicate how he proposed to pursue a consistent line in the months ahead, or perhaps in the years ahead if he were re-elected. It was a significant speech which had a well-reasoned theoretical core at its centre. The European press at once understood its significance and gave it considerable publicity both in news and editorial opinion. Do you know what was reported in the *American* press? Some off-hand remarks the President made two hours later about the comparative virtues of Vance and Muskie as Secretaries of State. That was all our press cared to mention because this offered splendid *ad hominem* gossip. Our newsmen were looking for a *news* event. They were not interested whether the President's analysis presented some new perspective, or shed light on some complicated trend, or defined in some deeper sense what ought to be the role of a changing America in a profoundly changing world. These are the kind of themes which our press and television do not convey and in which the great majority of people writing out of Washington are just not interested. What they find more appealing are the *either/or* presentations of world issues, "good guys" versus "bad guys", "hawks" versus "doves" and, as I have said, personal gossip and power-plays.

—Isn't it also true, though, that every society nurses a nostalgia for some simple and glorious chapter in its past? Americans have a yearning for the simple rules of the Pax Americana after World War II. In the Soviet Union, the Russian people's flight from a more and more complex economic and social reality has taken the form of a perverse nostalgia for the simple rules of Stalinism. In Britain, one of the great growth industries of the last 25 years has been nostalgic remembrance—in books, films, and television—of "Britain at War", 1939–45. Aren't the Americans, with their problem-solving traditions, doubly accident-prone? Nostalgia for some golden age has always been a substitute for growing up; but does that make the nostalgia any the less real?

BRZEZINSKI: I would not entirely agree with your parallel. I would certainly not agree that the American people's predilection for simple answers and the still uncertain beginnings of a cult of Stalin at grass-roots levels in the Soviet Union have a common denominator. The latter would seem to me to be not so much a matter of hankering after Stalin, as a typical and historically conditioned Russian fear of chaos. The Russians know in their bones that anarchy and a "time of troubles" are constantly around the corner; and the only guarantee against their recurrence that *they* can, historically speaking, see as real is: firm rule by some extremely tough father-figure like Nicholas I or Stalin. They will buy the toughness so long as they can have order.

In America, I can see no danger of any institutionalisation of "utopia-with-its-face-turned-backwards." The American people are too pragmatic for that. Paradoxically, our chief guarantee against simple-mindedness and uniformity is the freedom of the press: and here one has to hand a bouquet to the American mass-media. For while (as I have said) they are themselves great purveyors of simplistic notions about a complex reality, they tend to be, at the same time, highly effective watchdogs against empty sloganeering, corrupt practices, docility, and uniformity. One of the great strengths of the American polity is its pluralism and the diversity of its perspectives; and these are both represented and fostered by the media.

The prospect facing us for a long time to come is the *frustration* of complexity—not undue simplification ending up in demagogy.

I VENTURED TO SUGGEST *that a certain benign simplification may be a necessary tool in a politician's equipment. Would a democratic politician be guilty of tampering with his evidence if he explained the world to his constituents in terms of "Newtonian politics" rather than the Einsteinian sort as a concession to the average voter's limited time and cranial capacity?*

BRZEZINSKI: I don't think he would—and we did that very thing in a number of contexts. We did it, for example, to underline the very real Soviet threat to what I call the world's "third central strategic zone", namely the Persian Gulf (the others being, of course, Western Europe and the Far East). That was, if you will, an intellectual simplification of a

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complex problem, for one knows perfectly well that the crisis in the Persian Gulf has several facets which are either unrelated or only distantly related to the threat of the expansion of Soviet power. Nevertheless, putting "a red thread" through the complexities of the Gulf area seemed to us to be a desirable and justified simplification.

But we cannot reduce the totality of American foreign policy to our confrontation with the Soviet Union. Such a reduction would not even do justice to the American-Soviet relationship, much less to the overall complexity of the dilemmas we face in the world. What we paid a very high price for was President Carter's courage in respecting that reality. He refused to predigest every complicated issue for the nation. He refused to pander to nostalgia and escapism. When he said that the energy problem was "the moral equivalent of war", he said something profoundly true; but the public found it very difficult to understand. I don't think an American president should, whether by design or ignorance, lead the American people by using simplistic formulations, not to speak of demagogic ones. That would be ultimately destructive of American democracy itself.

—The simplistic approach has indeed many dangers—but where I would differ from you is in identifying the source of that danger. I would ascribe it in the first place to the average man's limited time-horizon and innate search for simplicity in a confusing world and to the occupational deformation of newsmen and TV-commentators only in the second. Another example. One of the great empty spaces in the consciousness of democratic societies is that between their perception of what constitutes "war" and "peace": War, for them, is what happens when armies clash and bombs fall—Peace when these things do not happen. We are not comfortable with the notion of any middle ground. Yet war and peace in the Soviet vocabulary do not have these rigid definitions. Soviet practice observes a whole spectrum of gradations between the two—making good sense for those schooled in Clausewitz and Lenin but puzzling for those brought up in different traditions. For the Kremlin, a "just war", a "peace offensive", "proletarian internationalism", or a "security" conference are but different stages in the same ideological continuum, much in the same way as legal work, covert action, and subversive activity are interdependent parts of a single Communist policy. In other words, Soviet policy on war and peace is a skilfully orchestrated complex affair, whereas the average (and not-so-average) man in a democratic society is sensitised only to a simple set of signals and can, therefore, neither understand nor successfully counter Soviet policy. How would you propose to deal with this problem?

BRZEZINSKI: I do not have a solution. The problem is a deep-rooted cultural one. We in the West, and particularly in the United States, have a tendency to think of reality as a set of generally unrelated, disparate events. Take our news media again: I suspect the average American *knows* more about what is happening in the world than most people do, yet he *understands* the meaning of these events probably much less than many people abroad. We have to learn to think in trends, to see the necessary continuity between such broadly defined manifestations as "peace" or "war." History is a turbulent, chaotic process which involves a continuing conflict between alternative concepts of life. In the deepest sense, our conflict with the Soviet Union involves the most fundamental assumptions regarding the nature of man. That conflict will continue for a long time, and we in the West have to learn to live with it—to cooperate with the Soviets while at the same time competing with them, and competing in the deepest sense of that word: competing for survival.

YOUR EMPHASIS on the world's complex preoccupations reminds me of certain personal charges which have been levelled against you. Let me at once say that I do not subscribe to these; yet looking at them briefly may add to our understanding of the foreign policy of the Carter Administration.

It has been said that, as an American Pole and a Roman Catholic, you are a "hard-liner" on the Soviet Union and Communism generally. But (so runs the argument) in the post-Viet Nam atmosphere of American politics, this hard line and, more particularly, your desire to see Eastern Europe detached from Soviet tutelage, could not be openly stated. Hence your philosophy of "global transformation", under the aegis of which you could plausibly argue that it was imperative for **both** *superpowers to adjust to the requirements of global emancipation. The US would have to trim its sails to an independent Latin America, and the Soviet Union, too, accept the fact that the world is no longer divided into watertight spheres of influence and give up Eastern Europe. The Soviet leaders' insistence on the rigid divisions of the Cold War—as both you and the President argued in a variety of formulations—rendered them and their policies irrelevant to the real problems of the world in the last quarter of the 20th century.*

Moreover, your critics point to two bits of "hard" evidence to give substance to their suspicions. One is that, in the 1960s, you had a plan, under "Peaceful Engagement",[1] to detach Eastern Europe from the Soviet Union, and that you are hardly likely to have given that up under the more recently coined "global engagement."

"Am I an unreconstructed hawk? Not quite. . . . But one has to concede that the Soviets have a point."

Second, that in the 1970s, you changed the name of your Institute at Columbia University from Research Institute on Communist Affairs to Research Institute on International Change without (or so your critics argue) changing the main thrust of its preoccupations.

[1] See Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Peaceful Engagement", ENCOUNTER, April 1965.

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Is it in fact true that your recurrent emphasis on "multipolarity", the redistribution of power, and the exigencies of "global emancipation" was (as the Soviets also allege) one vast deception to harm Soviet interests and get the Russians out of Eastern Europe?

BRZEZINSKI: No, it really wasn't. I happen to believe *deeply* that the world is undergoing the most profound political transformation it has ever experienced. This arises in large part from the dramatic awakening of peoples who were once passive subjects, but are now active participants in a political process that has become global but not yet orderly. It owes less to Marxism than to modern science—from penicillin to the transistor radio. In 1945, 51 states participated in the formation of the United Nations. In 1959, 92 states were independent. Today over 160 countries have achieved that status, and their number is still growing. By the end of this century 85% of the world's inhabitants will live on continents where this political and social change has been most rapid (and, inevitably, chaotic)—Asia, Africa and Latin America. So anyone as interested in global policy as I am has to be genuinely interested in that dimension.

"Communism as an ideology, and especially as an ideology tangibly expressed by the institutions of the Soviet Union, is dead. There isn't a single revolutionary in the world who would model anything he might undertake on the Soviet example. Most revolutionaries consider the Soviet Union to be a sterile, brittle, and stagnant bureaucracy—unfair and unappealing. In that sense Communism is extinct."

Now, as far as the Soviet claim is concerned that I am an unreconstructed hawk, and your evaluation that this is not quite right—I tend to agree with you in one sense, but have to concede at the same time that the Soviets have a point too. I am pretty sure the Soviets realise that fundamentally I am *not* a hawk, but they find it very useful to label me as a hawk because the Western mass-media of "liberal" and "progressive" persuasion pick this up and use it as a political weapon.

The real charge the Soviet leaders have against me is that my concept of dealing with them is as multidimensional as is their concept of dealing with us. They realise that, on the one hand, I advocate a policy of *toughness* with the Soviet Union which would constrain Soviet ambitions; while, on the other hand, I also advocate a policy of *accommodation* in a manner which would exploit the Soviet Union's internal weakness and thus promote significant change in the very character of the Soviet régime. The real reason why the Soviet leaders dislike me is that I know them well, understand their thinking, and have a policy for dealing with them. They dislike me because, applied over a number of years, my policy has turned out to be a more effective one than either the right-wing confrontationism of the Nixon/Kissinger line or the McGovern type of acquiescence that some people on our side were trying to persuade President Carter to adopt.

—Soviet political culture provides for the easy identification of only two non-Communist types: the straightforward "anti-Communist" and the bleary-eyed "fellow-traveller." The Soviet leaders have always preferred to deal with these. Men of your persuasion (and realistic anti-ideological Social Democrats too) puzzle them and confuse their reactions. Hence, to be on the safe side, they adopt a worse-case scenario.

BRZEZINSKI: The *real* Soviet preference is for men who lie down and accept every Soviet action. An ideal American foreign policy, from the Soviet point of view, would be one in which we recognised Vietnamese predominance in South-east Asia, rushed headlong into an embrace of Angola while abandoning *Unita*, lifted the embargo against Castro, and acquiesced in Soviet expansionism in the Indian Ocean—a foreign policy which some people (you may recognise them) have favoured over the last few years.

III. The Psychology of Toughness

COMING TO *the practical lessons of your four years in power: ten years ago you published an article in "The New Leader" under the evocative title of "Communism Is Dead." Would you, in the light of your experiences in the White House, still say that "Communism is dead", seeing that the moral and ideological bankruptcy of Communism has not stopped it from recruiting new dupes and extending its power? It was Jean-François Revel who recently raised the question in this form as one of 12 "sterile theories" about Soviet Communism.*

BRZEZINSKI: I would have to look at the article again to see what I actually said. But taking off from the title alone I would insist that the assertion that "Communism is dead" is generally true. Communism as an ideology, and especially as an ideology tangibly expressed by the institutions of the Soviet Union, is dead. There isn't a single revolutionary in the world who would model anything he might undertake on the Soviet example. Most revolutionaries consider the Soviet Union to be a sterile, brittle, and stagnant bureaucracy—unfair and unappealing. In that sense Communism

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is extinct. It is not the appeal of *Communism* that is creating the challenge to us in the Persian Gulf—it is the projection of *Soviet power*, directly or indirectly. It is not the power of Communism that is asserting itself over Afghanistan—it is Soviet tanks and helicopters. It is not the power of Communism that is translating Ethiopia into a potential base against us—but armed Cubans deployed by the Russians.

All this, however, is not to say that Marxism as a source of intellectual stimulus and a momentum for revolutionary movements is dead too. The two aren't the same.

—I could agree with you about the importance of the projection and increasing reach of Soviet power without quite agreeing that "Communism is dead." I would question whether self-styled socialists and Marxists in the Third World are capable of making a fine distinction between the impressive military power that is supplying them with arms and Cubans, and the sort of "socialism" **they** *are after. What matters from their point of view is that the ideological myth of the world's first Communist country is strong, that it provides them with a rhetoric, that its military muscle is formidable, that its willingness to oppose Western "imperialist" interests is immaculate, and its readiness to stand up for fellow "socialists" throughout the world (with or without Cubans) patently obvious. In other words, the Soviet Union is seen by them as the "Prophet Armed." I accept your emphasis on the arms—would you accept mine on the prophecy?*

BRZEZINSKI: No, "armed" expresses my meaning quite adequately—I cannot support your linkage with "prophecy." The Soviet Union, as a socio-political system, is simply too sterile, too bureaucratic, too uncreative to be associated, consciously or unconsciously, with the notion of prophecy. In other words, it does not represent the future.

IN 1972 YOU RAISED *a far-sighted question*[2] *about the problem of "parity" in the American-Soviet relationship:*

> **"What does it mean for our relationship when a crisis develops? Is it possible to bargain effectively and steadily in such a confrontation? . . . We have no guiding lessons, no diplomatic-military experience which can be deemed relevant, and the problem could become acute. One need only look . . . at the continuing Middle East explosiveness. . . ."**

How would you answer these questions in the light of Afghanistan? Today we do have a "diplomatic-military experience" that is relevant, and the problem has, as you predicted, become acute.

BRZEZINSKI: One of the things I was most engaged in during the last three years was pushing forward the modernisation of American strategic doctrine; and I did so by asking three questions. What will be, in the 1980s, the compelling elements of a "stable deterrence" at different levels of conflict? What will be the requirements of stable "crisis bargaining"? And what will be the requirements of an effective "war-management" if war breaks out?

I argued that in order to provide a convincing answer to the first—the question of effective deterrence—you have to work backwards from the third. That is to say: only if we can show our will and ability to fight a war effectively can we hope to be able to bargain effectively in a non-warlike crisis; and only if we have the capability of both fighting a war and bargaining effectively can we obtain a reassuring answer to my first question: how to deter the Soviet Union.

—Are you saying that the US under President Carter did not show itself ready and able enough to fight a war in order to ward off the threat to Afghanistan? Or did the Soviet leaders just misread the signals?

BRZEZINSKI: We are in a situation in which the Soviets could make—indeed have made—the dangerous error of assuming that parity between the two powers is sufficiently ambiguous to make it possible for them to impose on the American President a political solution through the exercise of a sustained threat, thereby significantly altering the prevailing equation between the two powers. That is a situation I have tried to make certain does not happen; and that is the danger now confronting us.

—Are you, in fact, saying that in Afghanistan "parity" did not work?

BRZEZINSKI: There was no parity in Afghanistan. The country was a neutral buffer-state tacitly recognised to be subject to a more pronounced Soviet influence than our own. None the less, we did a great deal to impress it on the Kremlin that military intervention in Afghanistan was an impermissible exercise of power. But we have never claimed that "parity" in the American-Soviet power relationship applied equally to every state in the world. It applies more to some than to others.

—In that case I am not persuaded that "parity" means very much in non-nuclear terms, because the Soviets are certainly intelligent enough to advance their interests only in places where their presence is strong and the American presence is weak. Afghanistan was one good example. Yet there are no counter-examples. If "parity" in the matter of Afghanistan was tilted (as it was) in favour of the Soviet Union, "parity" in Cuba is surely tilted in favour of the US. Yet the US has done nothing about Cuba. The sole beneficiary of "parity" has (so far at least) been the Soviet Union. Some conclude that the "destabilisation" or outright invasion of Cuba would have been the politically and geographically appropriate answer to Afghanistan—precisely under the heading of "parity."

BRZEZINSKI: It might have been the right answer if

[2] See Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The International and the Planetary", ENCOUNTER, August 1972.

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the right answer required a "tit-for-tat" response. However, a US military action against Cuba would have been enormously costly internationally; it would have deflected world attention from the Soviet aggression against Afghanistan; and it would thus have gotten the Soviet Union off the hook. I believe that our response to Afghanistan—a combination of direct and tangible sanctions with international condemnation—was the better response; and it also permitted us to take the necessary steps to strengthen our overall defence capabilities.

—Your three-point formula for the modernisation of American strategic doctrine implies the build-up of American forces across the board and a tough posture on negotiations. In other words: talking to the Soviet Union from a position of strength. Isn't this precisely what the Reagan people, General Haig, for example, say they will be doing? In which case American foreign policy in the next four years may not be very different from what you personally thought it should be, but was not?

BRZEZINSKI: This may well be so. But I have to take issue with your implied hint that the Carter Administration was somehow "soft" on the Soviet Union. It was President Carter who, for the first time in peace-time, increased the defence budget. It was President Carter who modernised NATO. It was President Carter who ordered the creation of a Rapid Deployment Force. It was President Carter who decided on the deployment of the MX-missile. It was he who shaped a regional security framework in the Persian Gulf and declared one year ago:

> "Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."

The President's statement was a new, historic commitment for the US, one with profound long-term implications for the West as a whole. It reflects the recognition that the central challenge of this decade is likely to be as massive and enduring as that confronted by American leadership in the first decades after World War II.

I suspect that the Reagan Administration will continue to be "tough" on the Soviets. I wonder, however, whether they will, at the same time, take advantage of the benefits of such toughness in order to exploit any opportunities for peaceful accommodation, as, for example, through arms control, and thus hasten internal evolutionary changes within the Soviet system. In my view, a wise policy ought to combine both.

—But wasn't your commitment to the defence of the Gulf region a piece of bluff unsupported by either the means or the resolve to make good on the pledge? Even by the most sanguine military estimates, it would take the US at least two weeks to shift to the Gulf area a lightly equipped force of about one division—by which time the Russians would have reached any target they wished and made mincemeat of its defenders. Isn't the pledge, then, an empty gesture—unless, under "parity", the US is resolved to make good on it **elsewhere**, *such as Libya or Cuba, or any other area where* **it** *has "clout" but the Soviets haven't?*

BRZEZINSKI: Democratic nations do not build up military power in order to expand their commitments. They first assume obligations, such as the one to defend the Gulf, and *then* muster their resources to meet those obligations. That was the pattern that marked America's military return to Europe in 1948 and 1949, *after* we had assumed responsibility for the protection of Berlin. At that time, too, President Truman defined a security obligation which our country, together with our West European allies, then rose to meet. Together we mounted a deterrent which has assured Europe's security.

—Doesn't America's virtual monopoly of nuclear weapons in 1948-49 make the parallel somewhat unconvincing? President Truman assumed the obligations he did in the comfortable knowledge that his nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union was almost total. The US has no such superiority in 1981.

BRZEZINSKI: The Soviets know that if they were to take military action in the Persian Gulf area we would not let them dictate either the tactics or the terrain of our response. In other words, they have to confront the very high probability of either horizontal or vertical escalation—undertaken in a manner designed to inflict the greatest comparable costs on the Soviet Union.

IV. Human Rights & Double Standards

CAN WE NOW LOOK at the Administration's "Human Rights" policy? This was the great new thing in the President's programme—one of three elements which seemed to him essential to his Presidency (the others being Arms Control and the preservation of the Environment and natural resources) and which won for him, at least in part, the 1976 elections. But the President's vision on Human Rights never emerged as a consistent policy. After his letter to Sakharov (and then his reception of Bukovsky) it was widely assumed that behind his world-wide Human Rights policy there was a well thought-out plan, not least vis-à-vis *the Soviet Union. The Soviet leaders themselves were extremely apprehensive that "Human Rights" equalled American encouragement of every kind of disaffection in their country, including support for the emancipation and self-determination of the non-Russian nations and nationalities as well as "self-determination" for Eastern Europe. But none of*

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these things happened. "Human Rights" were asserted as a policy towards countries **friendly** *to the US but were left hanging as a mere slogan over the American-Soviet relationship. Do you see this as the frustration of your original intentions, or were these intentions themselves extremely limited?*

BRZEZINSKI: We were not thinking of our Human Rights policy as a weapon against any particular country. It was, rather, a posture and an attitude through which the US would identify itself with an idea that was becoming *the* compelling idea of our time—Human Rights.

We knew from the very beginning that in some cases where our influence was preponderant we would be in a better position to promote that goal than in others. We also knew that in certain cases our leverage would be limited because various "trade-offs" and other considerations would have to be taken into account. Therefore, I don't think that our policy of Human Rights can be faulted for inconsistency. Inconsistency is inherent in the pursuit of any moral or legal objective. The fact that you have a law against theft does not mean that every thief gets punished, and the fact that every thief does not get punished does not mean that no thief should get punished.

Clearly we can be more influential with some countries than others. It would be quite wrong to claim that you can only pursue a Human Rights policy if you can pursue it absolutely and in exactly the same way in relation to every country. That would be an argument against any Human Rights policy at all.

We knew from the very start that the only manner in which we could influence the Soviets would be to sensitise them to this issue and make them aware of the costs of the violation of Human Rights—but not to the point of jeopardising other relationships. It would have been simplistic and unwise to do so.

—Yet both in Western Europe and in the Soviet Union your Human Rights policy was evaluated as one directed against the cohesion and indeed ultimately the survival of the Soviet state. **If** *Human Rights—then* **no** *Soviet system. President Giscard d'Estaing was probably speaking for himself as well as Mr Brezhnev when he said in 1977:*

> **"The problem is that the Soviets perceive this [Human Rights] campaign as a means of pressure to get them to abandon their system. And as we all know, their system is quite incompatible with Western liberal values."**

Chancellor Schmidt was equally worried. Both thought (as Giscard said) that President Carter had broken "the code of Détente." Were they wrong?

BRZEZINSKI: The Europeans and the Soviets were wrong on that.

—There was no intention to pursue Human Rights in directions the Soviets, as well as Schmidt and Giscard, most feared?

BRZEZINSKI: No, there wasn't.

*—***Would** *it have been right for the Administration to pursue such an expanded version of your Human Rights policy?*

BRZEZINSKI: It would not have been possible to execute a Human Rights policy with such an objective in mind.

—Was it understood in Washington at the time that the great emphasis given to "Human Rights" raised false hopes in those it was meant to encourage and increased the vigilance of those it was meant to disarm?

BRZEZINSKI: The implications and non-implications of the policy were better understood by some than by others. Every policy is differently evaluated by different people. Besides, we did increase global—including Soviet—awareness of the Human Rights dimension. Look at the Madrid conference.

—But, then, what exactly was the meaning of the President's words to Sakharov? It is, for a European, extremely hard to believe that a letter written by an American President to a famous figure of Soviet dissent and a recent winner of the Nobel Prize (delivered, what is more, by the US Ambassador) was meant to be a gesture, mere words.

BRZEZINSKI: Let's put all this in its proper context. Shortly after inauguration, the President received a letter of congratulations from the Nobel Prize Winner—to which the President decided to respond. If he had received a similar letter from a resident of, let's say, Pinochet's Chile, every liberal in the world would have condemned him for not responding. It seemed the normal and civil thing to write a polite answer, which the President did. Besides, not to have done so would have been an act of cowardice, matching President Ford's unwillingness to see Solzhenitsyn.

—Was the President surprised by the scale of world reaction and the hopes and fears aroused by his gesture?

BRZEZINSKI: The tremendous reaction in the world tells you something about the flabbiness of much of the world's state of mind. The President's action was one of normal courtesy. Much of the world would have been outraged if he had not done so.

—Are you saying that there was absolutely no intention to use Human Rights as the thin end of the wedge and to follow through once you had obtained some leverage?

BRZEZINSKI: As I said a little earlier, we did not look upon Human Rights as a policy designed to undermine the USSR. We did, however, feel committed to widening the scope of Human Rights

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wherever feasible, but clearly this was more feasible in some places than in others.

—But would you not say that by putting considerable emphasis on Human Rights in your relationship with the Soviet Union you were **bound** *to arouse the Soviet fear that the net effect of that policy would be some destabilisation of the Soviet system . . .* **whatever** *your intention?*

BRZEZINSKI: That is why we did not make Human Rights the sole facet of our relationship with the Soviet Union. It had several others. Let me stress again that we did not want to undermine the Soviet system, and we would not have got very far if we did. We had a variety of options *between* destabilisation and doing nothing. The Helsinki Agreement, for example, calls for a gradual enlargement of the scope of personal freedom. We have given that consistent support.

—But even "Basket Three" of the Helsinki Agreement, if carried out consistently over a longer period, would ultimately lead to a change of system in the USSR . . . as the Soviet leaders well know. Hence the suppression of their own brave little band of Helsinki-watchers."

BRZEZINSKI: Well—in the end everything comes to an end. The problem is how do you go about advancing certain desirable objectives. I believe we have been both consistent and realistic. We recognised that there were limits to what could be done.

—What I have always missed in the Administration's "Human Rights" policy was a sense of simple outrage at the ghastly things daily perpetrated by the Soviet Union and its agents. There has been a lot of rather clinical talk about the rights of this-or-that disadvantaged group: the decline of Jewish emigration, the rights of Blacks in Zimbabwe, and the like. But when, only a few days ago, East German border guards killed an 18-year-old pregnant girl (she fell dead with nine bullets in her body), the item went virtually unreported in the US media, and the Administration was conspicuous by its silence. Wouldn't the murder of young Marinetta Jirkowski (for that was her name) have been a more emphatic reminder of the real nature of Soviet rule than Congressional resolutions and statements in the Oval Office?

BRZEZINSKI: Yes—it would.

ONE PREMISE *which tends to flaw many of our judgments of the Soviet leaders is our politicians' assumption that the men in the Kremlin are basically "just like our own"—that their political education, their sense of right and wrong, their rationality in dealing with a crisis or an adversary are akin to our own culture and our own values. The requirements of ideology (so runs the argument) may force them to use a different rhetoric, but in their practical activities they are a chip off the old European block of political culture. Would you say, in the light of your experiences in the White House, that this is a legitimate assumption?*

BRZEZINSKI: No, it is not. It shows a total lack of any sense of history and cultural conditioning. It is a confession of blissful ignorance.

—In July 1977 President Carter made a speech in Charleston which included the following passage:

> **"Although there are deep differences in our values and ideas, we Americans and Russians belong to the same civilization whose origins stretch back hundreds of years. . . ."**

And he then proceeded to compare the ancient charm of Tbilisi with that of Charleston by way of illustrating his observation. Two questions strike me as worth asking. First, if Americans and Russians have "deep differences in their values and ideas", how can they actively share the same civilisation except in the remote sense that both Western and Eastern Christianity stem from the same root? Second (and this is the point in hand), isn't Soviet political culture—including that of the Soviet leaders—a direct descendant of Czarist, Mongolian, and Byzantine traditions, and thus doubly alien from our own: first as Russian, and then as Communist?

I am harping on this point only because I am astounded to see that so much of our political rhetoric is couched in phrases such as "Left will talk to Left" . . . "a fat Communist is better than a lean Communist" . . . "here is something to be resolved by the summit conference . . ." and the like.

BRZEZINSKI: Carter's parallel between the two civilisations strikes me as legitimate, and it is not inconsistent with the point I was making. Besides, Tbilisi *is* a charming old city (and I have visited it). It is not Russian—it has thick layers of Christianity, which Charleston also has (although the latter's are of course of more recent origin). It is also obvious that Russian civilisation in its Byzantine aspects shares a common heritage with Western Christianity. But none of this means that the power-obsessed old men in the Kremlin—products of a narrowly gauged Party bureaucracy—are in any way comparable with our own Western leaders. They are just not cut out of the same cloth.

"Stupidity generally tends to be more widespread than insight . . . But negotiations are meant to resolve specific issues and not to establish a philosophical consensus . . ."

Educated opinion in Russian society has been traditionally conscious of the gap separating Russian civilisation from the West. Pyotr Chaadaev (writing in 1829) observed:

> **"We are one of those nations which do not appear to be an integral part of the human race,**

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but exist only in order to teach some great lesson to the world. Surely the lesson we are destined to teach will not be wasted; but who knows when we shall rejoin the rest of mankind, and how much misery we must suffer before accomplishing our destiny?"

It is my profound conviction that the gap Chaadaev talked about in 1829 is, if anything, wider in 1981—and that it is in our and the whole world's interest that it should be closed. Stressing the common source of American and Russian culture could help there. Our long-term goal must be to encourage the Soviet Union to act as a constructive world power. Bridging the ancient division between Russia and the West—without in any way pretending that it has already been bridged—could be one important step in that direction. That was the meaning of President Carter's words. But (to repeat) this should not lead anyone to the naive conclusion that the Russian leaders share our assumptions. They do not.

—Would you agree, though, that the idea is prevalent among Western politicians and journalists?

BRZEZINSKI: Stupidity generally tends to be more widespread than insight.

—But aren't international negotiations completely ruled out unless one builds on the hypothesis that our assumptions are their assumptions, and our rationality is their rationality?

BRZEZINSKI: Negotiations are meant to resolve specific issues and not establish a philosophical consensus. Negotiations can be conducted, and can

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"I do believe that we should compete assertively with the Soviet Union and do so with a sense of historical optimism, realising that our ideas and achievements are much more compelling than those of the Soviet Union, and that the Soviet experiment with Communism has been an historical failure."

---

be effective, even if there are differences in assumptions and in the nature of rationality. What has to be avoided is negotiations which yield broad, sweeping conclusions—such as the Nixon-Brezhnev statement of "principles." That was a misleading and in some respects counterproductive document, because it did imply shared assumptions and a common rationality, at a time when none existed.

V. Conflicts, Contradictions, Causes

"UNCOORDINATED SIGNALS and conflicting policies"—this is how European governments and journalists tended to react to Washington in the last four years. There was a feeling abroad that, however highly one might think of President Carter's goodwill and intelligence, he and his crew were not reading from the same sheet of music.

BRZEZINSKI: In a democracy it is perfectly natural to have a cacophony of voices. If you were sitting in Sparta and getting intelligence reports of the discussions going on in the *agora* in Athens, you would probably have been confused.

—But Mr Carter's critics have faulted the consistency of his own thinking too. They point, for example, to the confusing emphases, if indeed not straight contradictions, between his address at Notre Dame University in May 1977, and his speech at Annapolis just over one year later.

In Notre Dame the President stressed the need of international morality, multipolarism and planetary duties, telling us that America had been suffering from

"an inordinate fear of Communism [which] once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in our fear.... We fought fire with fire, never thinking that fire is best fought with water. This approach failed, with Viet Nam the best example of its intellectual and moral poverty...."

At Annapolis, on the other hand, Mr Carter stressed the dangers of Soviet expansionism, Moscow's "continuing aggressive struggle for political advantage" under Détente, the abuse of Human Rights in violation of the Helsinki Agreement, and the implications for the world of Soviet domestic tyranny, warning that

"The Soviet Union can choose either confrontation or cooperation. The US is adequately prepared to meet either choice...."

Mr Carter's critics were set wondering how two such views could coexist in the same breast.

BRZEZINSKI: If you read those two speeches carefully you will see that they contain no contradictions. The Notre Dame address said that we should not be swayed by "an inordinate fear of Communism", and, as we have seen earlier in this conversation, there is in fact nothing to be feared about Communism because it is, as a political and ideological force, no longer vital. The Annapolis speech made a different point, namely that we should be prepared to cooperate with the Soviets in a number of important areas (Arms Control, the Environment, and so forth), but also compete with Moscow very assertively in other areas, and the President posed the question whether the Soviets wanted cooperation or confrontation. These statements are clear and internally consistent.

Unfortunately, a number of commentators

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perpetuated the myth—factually inaccurate—that the President somehow had one draft from Vance and one from myself, and that he spliced the two together.

The Annapolis speech was written largely by the President himself and reviewed jointly by Vance and myself. A number of minor changes were made in the draft, but the speech remained, in my judgment, a cohesive and internally consistent product. The Notre Dame speech was in some degree my work, and I would stand by it.

—You are, then, not surprised to hear Soviet commentators making the accusation that Mr Carter's "crushing failure" stemmed from the "gambles and malicious actions of Brzezinski"?

BRZEZINSKI: No—abuse from *those* quarters is always welcome.

—Talking of malicious accusations, what about Hodding Carter III's recent allegations about the authorship and subsequent publicity surrounding Mr Carter's Notre Dame speech . . . in "Playboy" of all journals of opinion?

BRZEZINSKI: Hodding Carter III was a press-bureaucrat in the State Department who had not the remotest connection with the policy-making process. I don't think anyone would take him seriously as an intellectual arbiter. I'd leave it to the readers of *Playboy* to make what they will of Hodding Carter's story. I occasionally look at *Playboy* in the barber's shop—but not for intellectual enlightenment.

IT IS CLEAR *from what you and President Carter repeatedly said about the need to do justice to the global questions of equity, emancipation, and Human Rights that the Administration was, in principle at least, sensitised to the kind of turbulence that occurred in Iran in 1979 when the Shah was driven from his throne and the US stood by without "usable clout" and apparently without a policy. Iran and then the Hostage affair became the symbols of American humiliation and frustration right across the board. They were instrumental in losing Mr Carter the 1980 elections and shook Allied faith in American leadership.*

Wasn't this a case of "the best being the enemy of the good"—too much complex global thinking blotting out the spectacle of what was happening on America's doorstep? Or was it rather that the Administration was split on Iran—McGovernites and Ambassador Sullivan implicitly rooting for the fall of the Shah and thus fatally weakening alternative policies—your own?

BRZEZINSKI: In all fairness, I must admit that there was a deep-rooted division within the Administration about the Iranian crisis. My own view was that Iran was a strategic asset for the West, and that our policy should take that as its point of departure. We should do what was necessary to prevent a political development which could transform Iran from an ally into an enemy. Moreover, a successful revolution is a rare historical phenomenon. No revolution is inevitable until after it has happened. Revolutions do happen when socio-political unrest is combined with a failure of political will. A policy of measured reforms and firmness can avert most revolutions, and this is what I felt should be pressed upon the Shah. I never subscribed to the view that Khomeini was a benign figure, and that somehow one could organise a coalition government with him and his supporters while replacing the Shah. I felt that was a prescription for handing Iran over to our adversaries.

—Did the Administration have a policy for Eastern Europe? On the face of it, amidst all your preoccupation with "global unrest" there was perhaps not much thought left to be given to unrest in Eastern Europe—even though the Polish troubles had been predicted by students of Communist affairs years before they actually happened.

The Administration has taken credit for normalising its relations with Latin America, urging the Soviet Union to do likewise in Eastern Europe. Yet the Soviets have paid no heed to your warnings and are now threatening Poland. America has acquired "global consciousness" while the Soviets appear to be acquiring the globe.

BRZEZINSKI: We did have a consciously formulated policy for Eastern Europe, and it may be summed up in two words: quiet differentiation. We deliberately enlarged the scope of our relations with countries which showed some inclination to pursue either an independent foreign policy or at least an autonomous domestic policy—Hungary, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Poland. Yugoslavia fitted both criteria, Rumania the first, Hungary and Poland the second.

—But wasn't this a long cry from your idea of "peaceful engagement" (in the 1960s) which sought, in the first place, to excise East Germany from the Soviet bloc and then slowly to detach the whole of Eastern Europe from Soviet control by methods of economic, cultural and political "peaceful engagement"—penetration, in reality?

BRZEZINSKI: It was a more limited and more refined version of "peaceful engagement." My suggestions in the mid-1960s for the isolation of East Germany were tactical. I wanted the Federal Republic to recognise the Oder-Neisse line and the new realities in Eastern Europe so that we could more effectively pursue a policy of "peaceful engagement" with Eastern Europe. I knew that I could not get the West Germans to do that *and* recognise East Germany at the same time. So the best way to induce West Germany to be interested in this approach was to say that Communist East Germany was an embarrassment to the Kremlin and in need of being isolated.

—But Ostpolitik *did not quite work out that way—*

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BRZEZINSKI: No, it didn't—hence our policy of "quiet differentiation" in the last four years.

—What about Poland?

BRZEZINSKI: As far as the Soviet presence and Soviet interests in Eastern Europe are concerned—why don't we suspend judgment to see how events work out there? What is happening in Poland is historically of the greatest importance, but we may be well advised to leave it at that.

—I appreciate that this is a difficult question for you to answer—but looking at it, as sometimes we must, from the purely Western point of view, wouldn't future historians deride us for not saying, at least in our inner councils, that it would be much to the long-range advantage of free men and women everywhere if the Polish crisis were allowed to blow up in the face of the Soviet Union, putting great strain on the cohesion of the whole ghastly tyranny? Would this not, at the very least, cause a resounding setback to the USSR's entire world posture? Would it not at once repair the Allies' faltering unity? Would it not put an end to our unseemly quibbling about minute increases in our Western defence expenditure? Would it not put paid to a deceptive Détente under which, year after year, and at great danger to our long-term interests, we bail out the disastrous economies of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe?

BRZEZINSKI: Well, what if we did as you suggest—what if our unhelpful attitude *vis-à-vis* the Polish crisis led to Soviet intervention, military occupation, massive bloodshed and, concomitantly with these, the intensification of police repression in the Soviet Union? Would that be in the interests of either the Poles, or of the Soviets, or of the West, or of world peace?

—In the long run it might.

BRZEZINSKI: I am sceptical. I am doubtful whether such an upheaval would lead to the disintegration of the Soviet system; but it would certainly lead to chaos and a world crisis of the first magnitude. Only the poor and the weak can afford to have wars and war-like crises in our day.

—But this is not the sort of consideration that guides Soviet policy. The Russians thought nothing of launching a warlike crisis in Afghanistan, rightly suspecting that after the hullabaloo of a few weeks or months the West would put up with the loss of yet another bit of real estate. As it did.

BRZEZINSKI: I am not talking here of the considerations guiding Soviet policy, but of the consequences of Soviet military intervention in Poland. I believe that these consequences would not be good for anyone.

I HEARD General Edward Meyer (Chief of the US Army staff) declare at a recent public seminar that the US Army would find itself in deep trouble if it were called upon to fight a conventional war between now and 1985, because it had inadequate personnel, training and equipment. He spoke of a "hollow Army."

This is surely a most disturbing fact for the US and NATO. How did it come about? And what are the US Administration's options if the Soviets decide to make use of the 1981–85 window of opportunity in order to "muscle in" on Western interests or threaten to do so politically by sheer conventional preponderance?

BRZEZINSKI: You must remember, first of all, that generals always assert that the military establishment has not been sufficiently financed. Therefore, to some extent, such statements must be seen as self-serving. Secondly, it is true that because of the Vietnamese war American military readiness has declined. Carter and Harold Brown did what they could in the last four years to enhance American military preparedness, and I hope that our successors will continue these efforts. They were a marked departure from the trends of the preceding years, including the last eight Republican years.

In any case, it is true that there will be "a window of opportunity" for Soviet assertiveness during the next several years. It is for this reason that the West must, first of all, meet *all* its ongoing defence commitments (including the 3% real growth undertaking) and, secondly, demonstrate credible willingness to resist, at whatever cost, direct Soviet expansionism. Precisely because our capabilities may be relatively weaker, our demonstrated will must be stronger.

VI. Of Passive Minds & Mindless Activists

IN A famous interview with Arnaud de Borchgrave in July 1977 the French President was reminded that the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe had accumulated 60 billion dollars' worth of Western credits and that these (plus Western technological transfers) were making a direct contribution to the Soviet military effort. He told the President that 60% of Soviet enterprises were engaged in production for the armed forces, and wondered how all this could be made to square with "reciprocal Détente." Giscard answered as follows:

> **"Western countries had to make a fundamental choice between collapsing the Soviet system or helping it to evolve. To travel the liquidation route required the means to back up such a policy, which would, of course, imply military superiority and economic measures that would have condemned the Soviet Union to its decline and fall. . . . Détente is an option on the opposite course that is designed to avoid confrontation. . . . So to push the Soviet Union into economic disaster would be counter-productive. . . ."**

Is this not tantamount to saying, in plain English: "We have a violent man for a neighbour, we are so frightened of him that we'd better humour his ill temper and give him what he wants in the hope that he will leave us alone. . . ."?

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How would you react to Giscard's words? Doesn't helping the Soviet Union **anywhere** *mean helping the Soviet Union* **everywhere**? *Or is Giscard's caution to some extent justified, in view of General Meyer's confession as to the state of the US Army?*

BRZEZINSKI: My view is somewhat different. I do not believe the West can drive the Soviet Union into an economic disaster. But from this it does not follow that the West should therefore give the Soviet Union whatever it desires in the area of technology, and especially advanced technology. We should discriminate, and discriminate very carefully. Moreover, the Soviet Union should know that positive economic relations with the West are to some extent a reward for positive political conduct—and that the obverse is equally true.

—Why were relations between West Germany and the United States seemingly so bad during the four years of the Carter Presidency?

BRZEZINSKI: I can fit the answer to this question perhaps into three basic words: economy, strategy, and vanity.

The initial impetus for misunderstanding came from Chancellor Schmidt's feeling that the new Carter Administration was not correctly defining its economic priorities. This feeling led to some acerbic exchanges between Schmidt and then Treasury Secretary Blumenthal. We wanted the German economy to accelerate, because our feeling was that this would help to regain momentum for the world economy as a whole. Schmidt was more concerned with inflation, and, in retrospect, I must concede that he was basically right.

Strategic differences also contributed to the disagreement. We tried to be sensitive to Germany's special position and to respect Germany's special stake in *Détente*. At the same time, we could not accept the view that *Détente* could be somehow compartmentalised and that Soviet misconduct world-wide should not be a matter of tangible concern to our European friends, including Germany. We tried to make it clear to the Soviets that there had to be some balance between cooperation and competition, and that unrestrained competition, especially in the Third World, would eventually undermine cooperation.

I am not sure whether this point of view was understood by Bonn. The neutron bomb matter is a case in point. Germany was not willing to let it be deployed because of its consequences for *Ostpolitik*; we were not prepared to assume the responsibility for production and deployment without a clear-cut commitment from Germany that it could be deployed. The matter thus became conditional on third-country acceptance, and the resulting postponement produced resentments in both Bonn and Washington.

I suspect that there was also some resentment that we did not pick up Schmidt's and Bahr's offers to be intermediaries between us and Brezhnev. We felt that we should consult closely with our Allies but deal on our own with the Soviets. It would not be good for the Alliance, or for Germany's membership of that Alliance, for Germany somehow to become an intermediary between Moscow and Washington.

The foregoing may have hurt some feelings, and it is a well known fact that the Chancellor's vanity is not lilliputian. In any case, there developed a pattern: the Chancellor would meet with President Carter, assure him of his friendship and admiration, and then privately criticise him and his associates to various people, including American and German newspapermen. This would then be reported back here, often in an exaggerated or distorted fashion. I am convinced that President Carter genuinely wanted a good relationship with Chancellor Schmidt; I think that Chancellor Schmidt wanted it also, but the combination of economic and strategic differences contributed to the personal tension. In spite of it, the two governments did manage to work together on a number of key issues, such as TNF (Theatre Nuclear Forces) or international economic issues. Thus the enduring and overriding reality of American-German friendship was not adversely affected.

WHAT WOULD YOU *regard as the principal foreign policy accomplishments of the Carter Administration?*

BRZEZINSKI: First, the re-identification of America with certain basic ideals: justice, equity, majority rule, self-determination, dignity of the individual—and here our Human Rights policy was essential.

Second, the Camp David accords—the first peace treaty ever between an Arab state and Israel.

Third, the normalisation of our relations with one of the world's potentially most powerful countries and the world's most populated country: China. Today our cooperation with China is comprehensive, even though there was considerable opposition to making it so.

Fourth, the Panama Canal Treaties and our new relationship with Latin America.

Fifth, the revitalisation and modernisation of American strategic doctrine and military posture.

Sixth, our new relationship with the moderate Arabs and the effort to build a regional security framework in the Persian Gulf.

Seventh, a policy of differentiation towards Eastern Europe.

Eighth, international energy agreements designed to give the West increased capacity for dealing with future energy crises.

Ninth, American commitment to majority rule in Africa and the concomitant emergence of a new relationship with the whole of Africa.

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There are others, but these stand out.

—Some years ago (writing in "Foreign Policy") you prepared a report-card on the successes and failures of the Nixon-Kissinger Administration. How would you mark your own performance in foreign policy?

BRZEZINSKI: Speaking of the overall Administration record, I would say somewhere in the range of A−/B+.

—What would you do differently if you could play the game again? Did the US, for example, under-react to Cuban intervention in Ethiopia and the pro-Soviet coups in South Yemen and Afghanistan?

BRZEZINSKI: Yes. I have said that "SALT lies buried in the sands of Ogaden", because I do feel that our under-reaction at the time emboldened the Soviets to be more assertive, thus creating in time a strong US public reaction which eventually precluded the ratification of SALT.

—Where do you see your own role most conspicuously represented in the successes of the Carter Administration?

BRZEZINSKI: Well, as I look back on the four years, not only am I proud of President Carter's record, but I am proud of a number of things I did myself. I played a not irrelevant part in achieving US-Chinese normalisation and then in the expansion of that relationship (including the security dimension). This has wider geopolitical implications.

Second, I have played a role in initiating a broad programme of strategic modernisation incorporating the *MX* decision, Presidential Directive 59, that is, moving away from the doctrine of "Mutual Assured Destruction" (MAD). Finally, I was deeply involved in shaping the regional security framework for the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

The latter, I am firmly convinced, will be judged by historians to have been as significant a departure in US attitudes as the one we undertook in the 1940s to defend Western Europe, and the one we initiated in the 1950s to secure the Far East. The President's statement of January 1980 guaranteeing the integrity of the Persian Gulf was one on which I worked very closely with him. That is an important legacy which gives me a certain satisfaction.

At a somewhat lower level, I was profoundly involved in trying to avert a crisis in Poland and in getting the US to adopt a policy that differed from the ones we adopted both before and after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia—

—Meaning?

BRZEZINSKI: That we would not convey indifference or disinterest. Also, I worked hard to stimulate a revival of US *political* intelligence in contrast to "hardware intelligence", that is, re-emphasising the role of the human element in intelligence-gathering, analysis, and evaluation as distinct from the post-Viet Nam preference for satellite and computer-based work.

But it is the first three—China, strategic modernisation, and the defence of the Persian Gulf—that have given me most satisfaction. They have all been in the national interest, and I am convinced that my successor in this position will want to build on them and push them forward.

—Has the relationship with China developed as far as you hoped it would?

BRZEZINSKI: It developed further than I would have thought possible at the time of my visit. I went with a secret Presidential instruction in my briefcase empowering me to start a new phase in the American-Chinese relationship. It authorised me to tell the Chinese (and I quote): "*The United States has made up its mind*"—because the Chinese had kept saying in their propaganda that we had been half-hearted and had not made up our minds.

You will recall that the Ford-Kissinger visit to China involved certain setbacks and a retreat from the impetus of the Nixon-Kissinger visit which culminated in the Shanghai Communiqué. The Vance mission of August 1977 did not work out satisfactorily either. When I went, in May 1978, I was charged with the task of generating fresh momentum in the American-Chinese relationship. And I was able to do so because I took as my point of departure our common strategic interests. . . .

—vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. . . .

BRZEZINSKI: That's right. I used that as a vehicle for moving towards normalisation, and then for heavily enlarging the scope of the whole relationship.

—Are you satisfied that it has gone as far as it is wise for it to go?

BRZEZINSKI: No, in certain sensitive areas it could go still further.

—Would you regard the Chinese as allies in all but the formal sense?

BRZEZINSKI: Not in the formal sense, but they and we share strategic interests.

—Are you not worried that, even as an informal ally, China is most unlikely to satisfy American notions of Human Rights?

BRZEZINSKI: China's current evolution is causing some of the values of ancient Chinese civilisation to resurface and reassert themselves in the Chinese

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polity. We are beginning to see a subtle merger of these values with the modernisation programme associated with the name of Deng Hsiao-ping. How it will work out over the long haul, I do not know. In the meantime, however, there can be no doubt that we and the Chinese share a common interest in containing Soviet power, in making certain that Soviet surrogates do not control South-east Asia and the Straits of Malacca, and that the "Third World" (the so-called non-aligned states) does not become a pliant tool of Soviet expansionism.

LOOKING BACK OVER *the four years and the ideas you brought to your job from academe, did you find that some of the certainties you had committed to paper in your various books and essays were too well organised and too neat for the daily practice of politics—that they did not stand up to the rough-and-tumble of Washington?*

BRZEZINSKI: No, I would not say that either my political priorities or my strategic concepts have been basically altered by my experiences in the White House. Recently I looked at the "Ten Goals" I had helped to define for the President two months after his Inauguration. I still consider them to be pertinent and still worth pursuing. What *has* altered in my mind is my notion of how difficult it is to translate objectives into reality. I have already touched on some of this earlier in our discussion.

"I flatter myself that I am a systematic thinker; I do happen to have deeply-felt beliefs about right and wrong; and I hope I have some sense of history. . . . Combining thought and action has always had a great appeal for me."

Let me just add that I had an insufficient appreciation of the extent to which policy-making is chaotic in the extreme, an almost hopeless attempt to catch up with events that seem for ever to outpace you . . . that policy judgments have to be made on inadequate knowledge, that much of foreign policy involves the resolution of irrelevant personal and institutional diversions, and, finally, that much of foreign policy is determined by the deliberate bureaucratic distortion of decisions firmly made and how urgently therefore it requires an enormous output of energy in a purely watch-dog capacity.

—It does not sound like an attractive proposition. . . . What makes a distinguished academic seek public office?

BRZEZINSKI: I never considered myself an academic pure and simple. I have always been interested in the sensitive correlation between ideas and action. In my private hierarchy of "thinkers" and "doers" I hold highest the man who entertains strong philosophical, moral, or religious ideas and is prepared to take practical action to put them into effect.

Second in my scale is the man who engages in actions which have the effect of causing desirable ends to be achieved even if he has not himself consciously initiated them by setting himself philosophical or moral targets.

The third person in my hierarchy of values is one who thinks of such ends and articulates them and gets others to attain them.

The fourth is one who is contemplative and passive, and the fifth who engages in mindless activism.

While in my personal ambition I would aspire to place myself in the first category, I realise that no one can fully achieve his wishes. I flatter myself that I am a systematic thinker; I do happen to have deeply-felt beliefs about right and wrong; and I hope I have some sense of history. I am certainly guided by a desire to implement such norms as I have, and to do it myself. The combination of thought and action has always had a very great appeal for me. I never wanted to remain an academic locked in his ivory tower—but I found that the academic environment was helpful in the formulation of certain principles and priorities. The image of the simple activist, the moneymaker or the warrior holds no fascination for me, but I regard (as I have said) the fusion of thought and action as essential to the notion of a meaningful life.

—The temptation to add a bit of history to the one you spent so many years writing about must be persuasive. . . .

BRZEZINSKI: My interest in influencing things in the right direction has been with me since my childhood. The academic years at Harvard and Columbia were preparations for my years in Government, they were not ends in themselves.

—Your many ill-wishers in the academic community seem to be guided by ambitions not dissimilar from yours. Doesn't their jealousy seem to be rooted in the fact that you have "made it", whereas they haven't?

BRZEZINSKI: I agree. Academics can be terribly envious. I just didn't see myself sitting there in the senior common room wearing a 25-year-old tweed jacket, preparing the same lecture for the 120th time and exchanging gossip about other academics—instead of using whatever talents I may have to influence events in a genuinely significant fashion in the arena of life. I regard the latter as the greatest fulfilment.

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I HAVE, in recent weeks, subjected your writings in the 1960s and 1970s, and Mr Carter's speeches and statements during his Presidency, to a cursory textual examination; and it would seem to me that the whole drift of the President's foreign-policy thinking and even his language look remarkably like those of Dr Zbigniew Brzezinski. Would I be wrong in saying—and I know that modesty may prevent you from giving a straight answer to this question—that, in word as in deed, the grey eminence behind Mr Carter's throne was his National Security Adviser, and not either of his two Secretaries of State, or the Defense Secretary, or anyone else?

BRZEZINSKI: I would say there was a great deal of cross-fertilisation between us.

—But I know well enough that it was you who chose Mr Carter, years before his election to the Presidency, as a promising member of the Trilateral Commission of which you were then the director; and it was you who taught him the intricacies of foreign affairs. Would it not be true to say that in a sense it was you who adopted Mr Carter, and not the President who adopted you?

BRZEZINSKI: No, it would not.

—Yet, if I were to write a history of the Carter Presidency, I think I could quote chapter and verse to show that, whether for good or for ill, the ideological scaffolding of the Carter Administration in its foreign policy was your work, and I would have thought this was something you might justifiably want to take credit for. . . .

BRZEZINSKI: I appreciate your point. There is, of course, nothing to prevent *you* from drawing that conclusion—even though some would like to hang me from that scaffolding!

© *Zbigniew Brzezinski, George Urban 1981*

l'an trentiesme, de son eage

(Côte d'Azur, 1919)

Ospedaletti. The little hospitals—
a makeshift sanatorium for one,
despite a wicked climate of cold and wind.
A few miles down the coast, the weather
is far milder—the French Riviera just then
coming into fashion: Monte Carlo, Nice,
Menton with its Mansfield memorial. . . .
St Tropez was a fishing-port until
Brigitte Bardot put it on the map,
years later, by going around topless.
K.M. has T.B. With her is "L.M.", alias
Ida Baker. K.M. criticises her incessantly—
one disagreeable feature of her illness.
It's hardly the scandalous lesbian affair
you read about, but a sad, bitchy one. . . .
Her spendthrift nature; no intellectual
or personal stimulus to be got from her;
the sheer banality of her appearance—
her tiny blind breasts, her baby mouth,
the underlip always wet and a crumb or two
or a chocolate stain at the corners. . . .
God knows there are enough adversities besides.
—The gardener is a rogue: charging extra
for flowers he promised to supply free.
Like everything else, they are for Murry,
her husband. They have never really lived
together. She wants to lure him back to her,
but he is in England, advancing his career
as a man of letters. . . . She wrote to him,
I love you more than ever now I am 31.

Michael Hofmann

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Samuel Brittan

The Wenceslas Myth

Economic Illusions about Government & Other Self-Deceptions

"About 10.5 million retirement pensioners, widows and other social security beneficiaries are to get a £10 Christmas bonus this year under a Bill presented to Parliament by Mr Patrick Jenkin, Secretary of State for Social Services.

"The bonus which was announced in the Budget Statement, will be paid in the week beginning 3 December.

"This year's bonus will cost about £108 million and will once again be tax-free.

"The Bill also provides for the bonus to be paid in future years. The amount of each year's bonus will be fixed by Order."

Press Release, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY
20 June 1979

A CELEBRATED Christmas carol records the good deed of a 10th-century monarch, St Wenceslas, the prince-duke and patron saint of Bohemia. The monarch shared some of his own wealth with a poor man gathering winter fuel. The deed was one of personal generosity, and required no taxes or levies on his subjects. If such acts were repeated on any scale—and the legend hints that the incident was typical—they would have been costly for Wenceslas.

Even the one recorded act involved a personal cost, a march "through the rude wind's wild lament and the bitter weather." While his page shared in the physical effort, the brunt was borne by the monarch who marked the initial footsteps in the snow. His gesture was intended as an example to other feudal leaders, of which he was *primus inter pares*, and to lesser lords all the way down the social scale.

Therefore, Christian men be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

Contrast Wenceslas's gesture with the £10 bonus which it has become customary for the British Chancellor of the Exchequer to "give" at Christmas. This involves no personal sacrifice whatever by any Minister; it is a pure transfer from other tax-payers and can be given whether the Chancellor is personally generous or stingy. The whole institution started as a temporary measure for injecting spending power in the 1972 recession, and was repeated in subsequent years, except for a two-year break in 1975 and 1976 under the Labour Government. Revived in 1977, partly as a result of agitation from TUC leaders, who could afford to appear generous without any personal cost or sacrifice, it was repeated in 1978. The Conservative Government of 1979 introduced legislation to enable the bonus to be paid every year. No British Government could now go back on the bonus, without a great outcry. A Government which increased it would, on the other hand, be praised for that if for nothing else.

It is discussion of the Chancellor's bonus as if it were the generosity of Good King Wenceslas which epitomises the myth of government that penetrates nearly all political discussion today. According to the myth there exist tiny handfuls of people known as "governments" who could so act as to increase the supply of satisfactions enjoyed by the population if only they chose to do so but through malevolence or inefficiency do not.

Most political arguments are between rival groups. They may be economic-interest groups or groups holding different beliefs about Sunday observance or the importance of retaining an historic capital such as Jerusalem. The extraordinary aspect of these conflicts is the way in which people hoodwink themselves into inventing a scapegoat: the idea that their disputes are to be conducted vicariously by praising or blaming twenty-odd people around a Cabinet table. If everyone blames "the government", antagonisms between conflicting groups are softened, but at the

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expense of fostering illusions and excessive expectations. The worst sufferers from illusion are not the extreme partisans who believe that everything depends on their own side being in power, but the *soi-disant* cynics, who never tire of decrying the self-serving or incompetent nature of all politicians. Behind the cry "They are all a lot of rascals . . ." is the wishful thought ". . . Otherwise they would make us all better-off."

LURKING BEHIND the Wenceslas myth is the true and, indeed, platitudinous statement that at all periods in history human societies have failed to arrange their collective affairs as well as they might. There are ways of improving the rules governing relations between citizens. The position of some groups could be furthered at the expense of other groups or—more rarely—by a more efficient set of policies, or by some combination of the two. Proposals for reform contain a mixture of improved efficiency and changes in the distribution of wealth or power. The two elements are usually very difficult to disentangle and those who benefit from the redistributive element will have every incentive to prevent their separation.

The amount of improvement that is possible in a few years through improved government competence is clearly limited. Easy changes, which involve neither disturbing interest groups nor taking from some to give to others, have usually already been made under normal democratic pressures.

Apart from enforcing rules, governments are responsible for services, like defence, which people believe are better provided collectively from tax than individually through the market or voluntary effort. Collective or "public" goods have the technical quality of being defined as indivisible, or difficult to charge separately to each individual user. Certain services such as schooling may appear to be divisible and easy to price; but there are spillover benefits, for instance in widespread literacy, over and above the gains of an individual pupil. Demarcation between public and private goods will always be in part a political issue.

In all modern states, the government undertakes some redistribution of income. At the very least it accepts some responsibility for the old, the poor and the sick; and it may also take a more comprehensive view of wealth and income distribution. Redistribution can be regarded as a public good itself, and is at its most obvious in the tax and social security system; but almost every government service, rule or regulation is redistributive in that it imposes a cost on some people and (sometimes) confers a gain on others.

As Lester Thurow has put it,[1] each of us wants the benefit of services while transferring the cost to some other group. But we evade the problem of allocating loss when we pretend it would vanish if only we had better government. At bottom lies the infantile belief that the government ought to be able to manage the totality of our affairs so that we can *all* have more of something without less of something else; in other words, have a free lunch. Much of what purports to be criticism of the conduct of the public services is really a cry by particular interest groups for more redistribution towards themselves, enhanced or rationalised by an excessive expectation of what governments can do to boost the national economy so that other identifiable groups do not have to be asked too obviously to pay the cost.

The Myth in History

IN THE EARLY DAYS of monarchy, kings disposed of substantial personal resources, and there was no clear division between their own income and wealth and that of the state. If a medieval monarch spent a great deal on the relief of poverty, as King Wenceslas did, it was an act of personal generosity. Luxurious spending, lavish courts, endowments to the church, the relief of poverty, or military expeditions were alternative uses of resources. Although most monarchs did all these things, doing one more than another had a cost in terms of alternatives forgone.

The absence of unsuccessful wars and the plunder from successful ones (defined as those in which their own territory was not ravaged) were probably more important to the medieval subject than conspicuous acts of generosity. The whole package of burdens-and-benefits varied according to the ability, luck, and personal generosity of the ruler. Although taxation existed and was a matter of bitter complaint, the ideal was that "the King should live on his own." It made sense to speak of "good kings" and "bad kings" and to praise or blame them for some small part of the fluctuations of prosperity and adversity experienced by their subjects.

What then of city-states which never had feudal lords, or threw them off very early? It made no

[1] Lester Thurow, *The Zero-Sum Society* (Basic Books, 1980).

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sense to attribute the general welfare or the conditions of the poor to the personal generosity or meanness of the Doges of Venice or of Genoa. When an individual ruling family became so rich and powerful that its personal donations could affect the welfare of the masses, as may have been the case with Medicean Florence, the state was shifting in practice to a monarchical character.

But, generally speaking, if doges or senators were blamed for the condition of the poor, it was not for personal meanness, but for being instruments of a particular distribution of wealth, or power, or privilege. Popular uprisings, however demagogic in appearance, were constitutional in character in the strict sense of aiming at a different distribution of political rights and duties—and thus, ultimately, of property ownership.

APART FROM the hangover from the period of feudal monarchs with substantial personal resources relative to the small populations they ruled, another historical origin lies behind the belief that the government has or should have resources which could "make us all better off."

The "Voyages of Discovery" in the 16th century led to a blossoming of enterprises which had both commercial and governmental aspects. They were often concerned with the development of virgin or colonial territories, or extending trade together with the flag. The best-known example was the East India Company; others were concerned with the development of North American lands for the benefit of the Crown. Definable profit-and-loss criteria applied to their activities. In our own day the New Town Corporations exercise similar activities on a modest scale; and criteria such as industry- and population-attraction, or rateable value, can be applied. Nationalised industries are not included in this category because they are not supposed to exercise political or police powers of any kind.

There are also activities of a purely voluntary kind—such as tennis clubs which exercise some coercive governmental powers over their members by mutual consent, their final sanction being that of expulsion. The most spectacular examples of organisation with a declared purpose, with their own internal authorities or rules but no ultimate resort to police powers, are the large commercial corporations.

Exaggeration of the similarities between modern government and all these different types of bodies has led to what Michael Oakeshott calls the view of the state as an enterprise association.[2] In the business community there are those who have been calling for a *"Great Britain Ltd"* approach. Its exponents would like the government to act as the board of a super-conglomerate to promote the interests of national companies in competition against foreigners. Such corporations are fond of talking about the help allegedly given by Japanese and French governments to their industries in contrast to the attitude of Anglo-American governments.

This view is based on a curious travesty of the "Invisible Hand" doctrine. The striving of rival companies for profit will, under the right institutional environment (and with well-known exceptions), promote the welfare of the community. But to apply the corporate analogy to government involves the fallacy of composition—of supposing that because it may be sensible for an individual company to maximise profits within a framework of law and against a background of competition, it is sensible for governments to use their powers to maximise the profits of the totality of resident companies by means such as subsidies, import barriers, contract preferences, etc.

Internationally, the strategy has all the wastefulness of wars and armament races. The rival activities of different governments largely cancel out, at great expense to their countrymen. It is a zero-sum game from which all lose. But even if there were no retaliation, the strategy makes no sense for the rulers of an individual nation. The competitive striving of rival companies may help to keep business on its toes, but where there is artificial support of the whole corporate sector the element of compulsive transfer destroys the profit motive as a criterion of success in meeting social needs.

THE CORPORATE ANALOGY is wrong, root-and-branch. A company is judged *inter alia* by the dividends and profits it produces: the success of a tennis club may be a little more subjective, but it clearly has something to do with the provision of facilities for playing tennis and perhaps also with the club's record in competitive matches. A nation may have a similar all-out objective during a total war. Just possibly, if a "moral majority" is interested in a religious crusade (and in imposing a pattern of practice and behaviour to the exclusion

[2] Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford University Press, 1975).

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of every other consideration), the state can also be considered as one gigantic enterprise. But in most modern countries, most of the time, the citizens have a variety of individual objectives rather than one all-embracing purpose. Even a theocracy, like Iran after the fall of the Shah, may not in practice be able to exclude altogether considerations such as the living standards of its citizens. Citizen welfare is not, however, merely another objective; it is an abstract summary of a host of diverse desires and needs formulated by individual human beings.

Any government that tries to promote Great Britain Ltd will soon find that it must take into account all sorts of other non-corporate demands in the realm of real wages, welfare benefits, public services, and so on. It will then be back with the large bundle of mixed, excessive, and contradictory aspirations which raise the question of "Who-gets-what-and-at-whose-expense?" which the corporate analogy obscures completely.

The Competence Factor

THERE IS A FURTHER FORCE encouraging the myth of omnipotent and omniscient government quite apart from dim memories of benevolent medieval monarchs and misapplied corporate analogies. It arises from the deep-seated temptation for modern rulers to make exaggerated claims for the potential contribution of improved governmental competence to the general well-being.

The more democratic a country's political system, the greater the incentive for the rulers (who want to be re-elected) to satisfy the citizens' wishes. Democracy is compatible with many kinds of oppression: majorities can override minority interests, and a coalition of special interest groups can impose their desires on a majority. But in a democratic system rulers have to respond to a wide range of popular opinion and cannot indulge their personal whims in the way of a medieval monarch, or rule openly in the interests of a small clique of privileged families as in some of the old city-states.

Yet just when the picture of "good kings" and "bad kings" is at its most absurd, the electorate is most prone to classify their rulers as bad kings who ought to be good; that is, it vastly exaggerates the role of governmental competence in personal welfare. Politicians themselves, as part of the vote-bidding process, encourage the public to dodge the inconvenient question of loss attribution from proposed changes and over-emphasise the competence factor. A promise of improved competence is almost the only way in which politicians can bid for votes without alienating one group or another. Those who lose by the transfer of resources as a result of official policies or the ordinary passage of events will blame government, while those who gain will ascribe this good fortune to their own efforts, or to luck, or will merely take it for granted. Even those who are not at present suffering tend to identify with the losers, perhaps because of the satisfactions of costless altruism or the feeling that "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

The question posed by Thurow at the end of his *Zero-Sum Society*—"If elected, whose income do you and your party plan to cut in the process of solving the economic problems facing us?"—is not merely unwelcome to politicians; it is rarely asked by voters. At bottom they would rather not know that any substantial group will be hurt and insist on the political game being "positive sum" to a far greater extent than is remotely feasible.

Promises of improved competence may run into a credibility problem, but will not threaten the interests of potential voters. "Improved competence" can describe a wide variety of projects. It may range from general undertakings to "cut waste in government" to new ways of running the economy—whether Incomes Policy, or Demand Management, or "Monetarism"—which are supposed to make *everyone* better-off. Even where these theories have validity, they will be prescribed as costless soft options. For instance, "control of the money supply" will be prescribed as a technical device which will stop inflation painlessly. There is little emphasis on the fact that its introduction is likely to mean higher interest rates, cuts in government spending, or higher taxes, although a monetary target is little more than a rule-of-thumb for measuring what is necessary in these directions.

Political parties which claim to be anti-interventionist (or less interventionist than their rivals) suffer just as strongly from the temptation to exaggerate the government's contribution to general welfare, but this may take the form of exaggerating the benefits of non-intervention. Absurd expectations are built up about the effects of marginal reductions in taxes, of switches from one form of tax to another, or of miracles which small firms are supposed to achieve given a slight reduction in interest rates or red tape. Long-term lags in productivity growth, reflecting deep-seated features of society, are expected to yield a hoped-for cut of a couple of points in the share of the national product devoted (on one definition) to "public spending." Very senior ministers, who

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claim to be sceptical both of intervention and of forecasting, constantly ask how long their policies will take to "work"—whatever "work" may mean.

Brickbats & Blessings

POLITICIANS WHO APPEAL for votes and interest groups and media commentators who maintain a barrage of criticism have a common interest in exaggerating the competence factor. Politicians dislike identifying those who will lose as a result of their action, and critics are able to present a more attractive case if they can ask for costless reforms to be carried out by government.

An almost pure example of self-delusion is to be found in the perennial arguments on Child Benefits—transfers of income to families with children from those who have none, i.e. the rest of the population. Such transfers are to be found in the tax and social security systems of most Western countries.

Popular discussion of the size of these benefits illustrates the twin aspects of the Wenceslas myth: government as scapegoat, and government as universal provider. However much one supports Child Benefits, there is only one source from which they can come: the tax-paying population. Yet government ministers are attacked for "meanness" or "narrow-mindedness" in not making them sufficiently generous, as if the politician concerned had the personal wherewithal to be mean or generous on that scale. Any attacks ought to be on the meanness of our fellow-citizens whose views the government is trying to interpret and implement. It is equally astonishing that when Child Benefits are increased (or merely maintained in the face of inflation), governments are praised for their achievements. If anybody should be praised it is the taxpayers who have made income-transfers to those with children.

Paradoxically, claims to competence tend to exclude genuine reforms, which normally involve a jolt to some group or other, even if only a shock to traditional habits and reactions. The main political reason for economic inefficiency and slow growth in an advanced industrial country is the special privileges claimed and demanded by hordes of special-interest groups.

Take the Housing Market. Any worthwhile reform would bring (at least initially) higher rents, and higher tax payments for owner-occupiers. Even though most people would gain from the consequent reduction in basic tax rates from lower house prices, and reduced distortions in the housing market, the immediate impact on the mortgage-holder and tenant will attract most attention. It is not surprising that governments run away from such reforms, and pledge themselves to hold down rents and mortgage-interest levels—actions which, however attractive to those looking for costless gifts, make the real problems worse.

Exaggerated hopes from improved government competence play into the hands of groups looking for special privilege for themselves. A subsidy to home-owners, financed by taxes on people who are on average worse off, would not be easy to advocate. But if one dresses up subsidies as "savings incentives" or "better housing policies" the beneficiaries believe they are contributing to national virtue.

A PERFECT INSTANCE is the Common Agricultural Policy. This is a transfer of income not even to all farmers, but in the last resort to agricultural landlords. It reduces national income by forcing people to buy in EEC markets at above world-price levels, and by distorting the pattern of consumption. An importing country like the UK loses far more from consumer burdens than it gains from transfers to agricultural landlords. Yet a pattern of redistribution which no candidate could openly advocate at an election can be supported in Cabinet by high-sounding slogans such as "European unity", "a contribution to the balance of payments", or by irrelevant agricultural productivity statistics—and commonsense economics are drowned by agricultural ministers in EEC technicalities.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE of the Wenceslas myth, which it may be thought bad form to mention, was the widespread Western sympathy with the strike wave in Communist Poland, which led to the legalisation of "free trade unions." But the Polish strikers were not merely campaigning for human rights in a Communist country. The main demands which triggered off the troubles and remained important did not differ greatly from similar strike demands in the West. They were for higher wages, lower meat prices, a shorter working week, and similar material satisfactions here-and-now.

It might well be true that the inefficiencies and corruption of a state-directed Communist régime depressed Poland's economic performance. But however willing the régime might have been to mend its ways, there was no quick method by

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which the Polish Government could have increased national output sufficiently to satisfy the workers' demands. No doubt some redistribution was possible from the privileged Communist bureaucracy. But it is extremely unlikely that redistribution could have provided enough to satisfy all the demands. The attempt to appease one set of strikers led inevitably to fresh demands in other parts of the country. The Polish strikers were making the same mistake as political activists in the West—overestimating government powers to become a universal provider. In the end the demands could only partially be met, even with aid from both the Soviet Union and capitalist Western countries.

The most subtle examples of the Wenceslas myth occur when governments are blamed for features of the environment over which they have a deceptive appearance of influence. An outcry against the high sterling exchange rate followed the development of North Sea oil and the second world oil-price explosion of 1979–80. British industrialists and trade unionists protested about the effect of a high sterling rate in making their non-oil traded products less competitive in world markets. Now it was true that the British Government could influence the nominal exchange-rate quite easily by intervening in the foreign-exchange market and by lowering nominal interest rates. But the government has much less power over the *real* exchange-rate, which takes account of movements in cost-levels as well as in exchange-rates. It is this real exchange-rate which influences international competitiveness and most concerns the business community. It would have been extremely easy to lower the *nominal* exchange-rate by inflationary policy, but that would have raised costs and might well have left the real rate unchanged. Here again the appearance of government power exceeded the reality.

WAS THERE NO WAY in which the government could have brought down the real exchange-rate to a level uninfluenced by North Sea oil? There was. It could have followed the memorable advice of Sir Michael Edwardes of British Leyland: "Leave the bloody stuff in the ground. . . ." Even then funds might have moved to London on the strength of the untapped oil reserves. To be absolutely sure of preventing any impact on the real exchange-rate, the government would also have had to take measures to destroy the attractions of the City of London as a financial centre. Needless to say, both actions would have hit living standards. The "Wenceslas" mistake was to suppose that the government, merely by pulling a few interest- and exchange-rate levers, could achieve results which could not in fact be achieved without profound and painful policy changes which many business agitators for "a lower pound" would have been the first to oppose. Government ministers had their hands tied behind their backs in responding to this agitation because they were reluctant to expose their lack of power.

A closely-related example is Interest Rates. The truth is that, for a given level of public-sector borrowing, governments have little more power over interest-rates that matter than Canute had over the tide. This impotence was hidden by the administrative device of fixing one key interest-rate—long known as "Bank Rate", but more recently as "Minimum Lending Rate"—which registers rather than causes changes in the supply-and-demand for credit. The government has some small short-term discretion and can influence the extent to which credit shortages impinge on long-term or short-term rates. But that is all. If our rulers try to use their influence over the banking system to push down interest-rates in opposition to underlying market pressures, any temporary success is at the expense of higher inflation later; and the end-result will be still higher interest-rates than if the clamour is resisted.

THE CROWNING IRONY is reached when agencies which themselves share a good deal of responsibility for some social evil lead an agitation to blame government. A typical example is trade-union agitation against high unemployment. If there is one agency which exerts might-and-main to prevent wages from reaching market-clearing levels, where demand for labour balances supply, it is the unions—not only by collective bargaining under the strike threat, but by political support for minumum wages or uniform rates for adults and young people (or between regions), all of which price people out of jobs. At the political level, too, it is precisely those MPs who are most vociferous in support of subsidised housing and rent-control (which discourage workers from moving to where the jobs are) who are usually in the forefront of agitation against high unemployment.

THE WENCESLAS MYTH is rampant on the political Right as well as on the Left. One might, of course, expect overblown views on the paternalistic Right about what governments can achieve; but they exist in good measure among politicians who

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preach a private-enterprise, free-market rhetoric. While the basic mistake of the interventionists is to exaggerate the effects of government action, the mistake of the free-market school is to exaggerate the benefits of government withdrawal. Both British Conservatives and American Republicans have expected miracles of improved growth from marginal reductions in public spending or taxes as a proportion of the national product. They have also spread mistaken ideas of the ease with which such spending can be cut. Waste exists largely because it is undiscovered or difficult to dislodge, and despite pledges to cut waste, Conservative governments either have to reduce services or go back on their promised tax cuts—usually both.

Let us suppose that some government were to make substantial cuts in public spending by transferring to the individual citizen expenditures now financed collectively out of tax revenue. It is extremely doubtful if this would have a dramatic effect on growth-rates. The lag in British growth-rates goes back more than a century. Many European countries, such as Germany and France, with real growth-rates much higher than America or Britain, have the same or even higher public-spending or tax ratios. The argument for individual families providing their own unsubsidised housing, or making a greater contribution to the costs of education or medical care—and paying less in taxes—relates to freedom of choice, and perhaps to the efficiency of these particular services. They should not be based on highly doubtful speculations about the resulting effect on overall economic performance.

ONE DECEPTIVELY DANGEROUS SLOGAN (highly popular among British Conservatives) is: "Monetarism is not enough." It could simply be a reminder that a limitation on the circulation of money can control inflation, but cannot solve other economic problems or provide a magic carpet to prosperity. Unfortunately this slogan is invoked most frequently to suggest that interventionist policies exist which can solve these other economic problems and provide a short-cut to general prosperity. For example, it is often suggested that the proceeds of North Sea oil could be "invested" in British industry irrespective of the rate of return—in the same way as the state has supported projects like *Concorde*, British Leyland, or British Steel (enterprises, it should be remembered, which had no pejorative or jocular connotations when they were first established).

"Costless" Reforms?

IN MY VIEW, the worst example of the Wenceslas myth on the conservative side is that known among US Republicans as "supply-side economics"—which is the complete opposite of what its name suggests. It is not a careful study of the malfunctioning of particular markets with a view to removing distortions. On the contrary, it is an assertion that large across-the-board cuts in personal tax can be combined with increased defence spending without inflationary consequences, or deep cuts elsewhere, because of the productivity miracle it would release. As a practical remedy it is identical with the demand boosts so beloved by Keynesian economists (some of whom would like to see President Reagan give "supply-side" theories a try, and then claim credit). But while the more honest Keynesian economists accept and even welcome the Budget deficits their actions will bring, the Republican "supply-siders" argue fervently for the balanced-Budget principle. This kind of charlatanry has its mirror image in external affairs—a more aggressive foreign policy is supposed to advance US interests without increasing the dangers of war or imposing fresh burdens on the US or her allies.

CRITICISM of a government for acting in the interests of certain groups—whether majority or minority—is potentially more constructive than criticism for "failure to deliver the goods" for all. We are one stage nearer the real complaint which is against groups of citizens for whose special benefit government is alleged to be acting. A Marxist attack on a government as an instrument of "the capitalist classes" or "the rich" is potentially more plausible than the conventional opposition attack on overall economic performance.

I say "potentially" because in practice the dissatisfactions voiced in such conflicts are usually far too great to be soothed by any conceivable degree of income or wealth transfers, leaving aside the effect of such transfers on the total size of the cake to be cut. It is possible to have an honest debate with somebody prepared to defend the distribution of power, income, and wealth in a country like Russia or China, or—if preferred—Yugoslavia or Cuba. Debate becomes impossible with the Trotskyite who disavows all existing societies and dismisses as irrelevant (often because he has not read or understood) the kind of study made by Lord Diamond's Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth (set up

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under the Wilson-Callaghan Government), whose Reports showed the extremely limited gains which could be obtained for those at the bottom or the middle by redistribution from the top.

ONCE IN A BLUE MOON it is possible by sheer intellectual improvement in the management of our affairs to have such costless reforms: more of something without less of something else. In the early 1930s, the US Government and the Federal Reserve Board might, by preventing the destruction of the US money supply, have raised welfare without imposing great costs on anyone. Governments may have also sometimes harmed the public interest (with little to show in return) by hanging on too long to over-valued currency parities. Unfortunately, what should have been done on such occasions is clear only after the event, if at all, and remains controversial to subsequent historians. The great mistake is to take such rare periods—when it *might* have been possible for nearly everyone to gain, without any clear losers—as the model for public discussion. It is this fallacy which lies behind the media search for "a new Keynes" who will find some costless technical formula for solving all our problems.

Professional economists are not immune to such delusions. How else can one explain the popularity of gimmicks such as "tax-imposed prices-and-incomes policies" (TIP) to counter that stagnant combination of unemployment and inflation known by the ungainly name of *stagflation*? These technical gimmicks are expressed in the form "Take-away-the-number-you-first-thought-of-and-divide-by-*X*." They are based on the fallacy that stagflation is due to lack of technical ingenuity by governments rather than to the form in which interest-group conflicts express themselves under a paper-money system.

It should hardly be surprising that there are only a few occasions when the pure exercise of governmental brain-power is the key to improvement, as distinct from the overcoming of powerful interest-groups. If episodes such as the massive contraction of the world monetary circulation were at all frequent and predictable, ways of coping with them (e.g. indexed contracts, more rapid price- and wage-changes) would emerge.

Spurious technical matters are often raised to avoid the awkward question of who is to pay for proposed policy-changes, as in the 1980 UK steel dispute, when those who wanted the government to be more generous to steel workers argued that the cash should come from a higher government borrowing requirement. They cited in support those economists who thought that in a time of recession the government should run an even larger deficit than it already had.

On such occasions, the raising of a technical matter like "public-sector borrowing" assists evasiveness in several ways. Many citizens (who might otherwise have asked themselves whether they were personally prepared to make income transfers) are happy to take refuge in the thought that it is all an argument among experts. Others go further and suppose that they can use the suggestion of government technical incompetence to avoid the choice between their personal interests and those of the special group with which they claim to sympathise.

One should, therefore, be extremely suspicious of sudden discoveries of excessive fiscal stringency at a time of tension or dispute when it would be very useful indeed to conjure up resources from thin air. Should this remarkable coincidence occur and a fiscal margin really exist, it is all the more necessary to emphasise the alternative benefits which must be rejected in order to finance a particular course such as additional aid to steel workers.

THE MYTH OF GOVERNMENT as a group of people which can create something out of nothing increases the strains on democracy. If a succession of governments, led by diverse personalities and under the influence of diverse intellectual factions, stirs up expectations only to disappoint them, there is a risk of the whole system snapping under the strain. The danger is even greater when the commentators, the satirists, and those who claim to be drop-outs or apostles of radical alternatives base their condemnation on even more optimistic expectations of what could be achieved if government were rational, uncorrupt or even not there at all. The risk of disaster—and a lapse into dictatorship or anarchy—is clearly greater when many countries are passing through a period of economic stress and governments are more likely to fall short of expectations than in the halcyon post-War decades.

But there is no need to predict the "collapse of democracy" to make the case against the myth of "government-as-King-Wenceslas." The diversion of human energy into frustrating and futile directions is always sad. Myths about government can lead to tension and conflict, even to acute personal unhappiness (many a steel worker thinks he is out

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of work unnecessarily, because of a "stingy" government). It cannot be desirable that nearly all discussion of politics on television, radio and in print should be at the level of such infantile wishful thinking. There are, after all, a great many things which can be done to make the world a better place. The need is to address ourselves to each other rather than to make rival demands on "government."

Governments & Individuals

ONE APPARENT ALTERNATIVE to the myth of omnipotent government is to regard the state as a "civil association" (Michael Oakeshott's term) between individuals, each with his or her own set of particular purposes. The purpose of political activity is then, mainly to determine the rules under which individuals can pursue their own interests—which can be altruistic as well as selfish—without getting in each other's way.

The whole idea of civil association, or of a "rule of law" limiting the action of a temporary majority, is at the opposite pole to the elective dictatorship that has been the reigning political religion in Britain. Some politicians even want to sweep away the last remaining obstacle to an elected government and impose its will (or its latest manifesto) on a country. Followers of Tony Benn would see in the idea of new and specific constitutional constraints a "Tory plot" to frustrate a future Labour Government. Yet Conservative leaders chafe as much at the obstacles which other sources of power (whether local authorities or the civil service) impose against the immediate execution of their will; and they have been hostile to electoral reform, which could be the single most important potential brake on the dictatorial proclivities of any group of people thrown temporarily into a brief period of office following dissatisfaction with a previous government.

The belief that a rule-of-law or civil-association approach would necessarily favour the rich and the powerful is superficial in the extreme. The approach is "conservative" in the sense that it puts a limitation on the discretionary actions of the government of the day; but this applies to all governments, including those that "want to put the clock back" or reverse egalitarian measures.

The argument for civil association basically emphasises general principles (rather than discretionary action), and some limitation on the immediate enactment of the wishes of a temporary majority by rule-of-law and constitutional safeguards such as second chambers, weighted majorities, bills of rights, constitutional courts and so on. Without such institutions and the inhibitions they embody, the rule of law can degenerate into meaning anything that has been rubber-stamped by the Queen in Parliament. But the devices of constitutional reform are less important than the idea of fundamental principles and working assumptions to which particular laws and acts are subservient and which change at a different pace to the swing of the electoral pendulum. The demolition job that is required involves destroying any belief that because a government is freely elected it can be as arbitrary as it likes.

A more constitutional approach to government, together with an emphasis on rules rather than executive action, would be desirable in its own right and might ease some of the tensions to which governments are subject. But it would not necessarily eliminate the Wenceslas myth.

IF WE COULD EVER ACHIEVE a "Government of Laws rather than of Men", the odds are that the excessive expectations now placed on the government of the day would be transferred to the fundamental principles and rules governing civil associations. These rules evolve with time, and the direction of change is often controversial. But the question will still arise of what kind of association its members wish to move towards. Talk of "observing a tradition" does not help greatly if the tradition offers different intimations to different people.

There is a very thin line between asking government to achieve over-ambitious aims and debating the rival merits of rules or laws from which similar results are expected. Moreover, the instinctive tendency of some conservative writers to insist that political activity should not be concerned with matters such as full employment or social security—or the "health of the nation"—goes too far. Individual human beings have purposes and aspirations which cannot be ruled out of order *a priori*. Some of them can best be achieved by voluntary cooperation or through market activity. Others require the use of collective coercion; but although coercion is *ipso facto* undesirable it is not the only evil, and not all coercion originates in government. The question is not whether governments or politicians should have purposes—but which purposes can individually best be carried out through the coercive machinery of government rather than by other means.

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It is not the search for goals that is the error, but the search for costless options, the supposition that by invoking government we can escape asking at whose expense we want action to be undertaken.

THE ULTIMATE THERAPY for an intellectual malady must itself be intellectual. It would be useful to translate all political demands into statements about individual human beings; or, if that is not possible, into statements about specific personal categories.

Statements about governments, states, or nations should be translated into statements relating to individuals, who alone can feel, suffer or die. The most clear-cut need for such translations is in decisions about war and peace. Were the issues at stake after Sarajevo in 1914 or in Viet Nam in 1964–72 worth the death, mutilation, and degradation of so many lives?

Reference to individuals is also necessary in the more mundane case of income transfers to help those suffering from an adverse turn in the market. Such a translation should be made with some rigour. Aid for most specific occupational groups within the terms of particular disputes is likely to cost less than one percentage point on the basic rate of income tax. It is easy to be in favour of each special case taken in isolation. The criterion of "really meaning it" is met when a voter accepts the totality of transfers from himself for all cases of comparable priority over a specified period.

A shift from the abstraction of "the government" to the level of the individual is also necessary in another sense. Political demands would be less liable to frustration if those who made them had some idea of the specific actions they required of their elected representatives.

Members of a Cabinet are supposed to differ from the rest of us in being able to make decisions which can have the force of orders. Yet you only have to dip into the latest ex-Cabinet Minister's memoirs to see how little this power is worth in practice. It is not merely that ministers are hemmed in by colleagues, officials, past laws, subordinate authorities, inertia, and so on. Much more fundamentally, often no set of decisions exists which can satisfy what some people are urging without creating at least equal dissatisfaction on the part of others.

IF ANYBODY SUPPOSES that this essay is a plea for a more respectful and less critical attitude to government, he has wholly misunderstood it.

On the contrary, an attitude of superficial hostility combined with potential reverence for government comes from expecting vast benefits which it is not in a position to provide. Indeed, if we no longer look at government as a Good King Wenceslas or a Father Christmas, its real role as head of a coercive apparatus—a necessary evil, but an evil—will come more sharply into focus. Then we will be far closer to seeing the true sources of the abuse of power and the kinds of vigilance we need to exert.

Rescue of the Moths

When I rescued them from the dry bath
The two beauties took it calmly, as if
It was their due;—but not the third:

Small, mean, brown, this moth struggled
Angrily, and when I shook him from the window
At once was snapped up by a bird.

Geoffrey Grigson

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Tadeusz Szafar

Resolving the Polish Dilemma

Between Political Emergencies & Ideological Limits

"What happens when the proletariat is sick to death of the dictatorship which acts in its name? . . ."
Robert Payne
THE LIFE & DEATH OF TROTSKY *(1978)*

AT THE TURN OF November and December, 1980, a number of Poles living in the West (and known to entertain close relations with opposition leaders "back home") were unexpectedly approached by people obviously connected with the US State Department and similar American and West European governmental agencies. They were asked to get in touch with their friends in Warsaw, to warn them that a Soviet Army invasion of Poland was imminent, and to advise them to go into hiding.

Some of these rather arbitrarily chosen go-betweens did, in fact, do as they were bidden. As far as can be ascertained, all of them were treated with derision. One of the most prominent KOR activists, told (on the telephone!) by a close friend in Western Europe that authoritative American sources considered an immediate Soviet march-in "80% certain", reportedly replied that in that case he was ready to stake his head on the remaining 20%—and hung up. Visitors from Poland, asked to what extent public opinion in that country was intimidated by the threat of foreign intervention, reacted with genuine amazement. Confronted with Western mass media which highlighted troop concentrations on all three Polish frontiers—or told about a French Socialist leader's well-meant suggestion to dispatch NATO naval vessels to the Baltic to pick up "boat people" fleeing the invasion—they usually concluded that some people had apparently gone out of their minds. . . .

A lot of water has since flowed under the Vistula bridges and the predicted winter invasion has not materialised. The situation can, however, radically change before these words appear in print. There is a considerable intellectual risk involved in speculation on such a volatile subject. Without taking future developments for granted, it seems obvious that a diametrically different perception of reality and of future prospects has arisen on the two sides of what used to be called "the Iron Curtain."

THERE WERE evidently good and substantial grounds for Western anxieties. Electronic intelligence devices have become so sophisticated that no significant troop movement can escape unnoticed—the aggressive deployment of the Warsaw Pact Armies all around Poland was only too real. But no amount of satellite observation could provide a clue to the true intentions of the Kremlin, or read the mind of its masters. Military manoeuvres might well have presaged an imminent military operation; in fact, this still remains a distinct possibility if all else fails. But, on the other hand, there is nothing inconsistent in regarding the massive troop movements as the ultimate instrument of political pressure, a weapon in psychological warfare, a serious warning to Poland's Communist rulers to put their house in order—or else. In choosing the obvious, though not necessarily the correct, explanation, most Western observers clearly went wrong. The Poles, with nothing to direct them but their instinct of self-preservation, came nearer to the truth in believing that in this case invasion was no valid substitute for yet further attempts at a political solution.

Besides, one does not easily become frightened in the presence of long-familiar dangers. This species of Soviet interventionism in Poland goes back at least to 1943; since then, two generations have grown up accustomed to looking over their shoulders for a possible reaction on the part of "Big Brother." Already in July 1980, as soon as the recent wave of strikes had begun, official Polish

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propaganda raised the spectre of foreign intervention. In Poland nobody as much as blinked: cries of "Wolf!" have lost their alarming touch.

An armed invasion would, at the very outset, involve bloodshed, and then a prolonged military occupation with garrisons in every town and every major factory. It is perfectly feasible, but is it truly worthwhile? After all, the Russians do not have to invade Poland. They are already there, by agreement with their World War II allies, and grudgingly tolerated by the population. Their presence is inconspicuous, but sufficient to safeguard the survival of a social and political system which has no other claim to legitimacy. Except for a far-out fringe of die-hard nationalists, nobody has ever demanded their withdrawal, or even seriously envisaged a removal of all their stooges. In the reshuffle in which both the Party's First Secretary and the Head of Government were replaced, and only four out of 14 members of the *Politburo* appointed in February 1980 have retained their posts, the cast has indeed been seriously changed but the play goes on uninterrupted.

Comparaison n'est pas raison, but suffice it to compare the Polish Summer of 1980 with the Prague Spring of 1968 to realise that the outcome does not have to be the same. In Czechoslovakia, the Soviets were challenged by the ruling Communist party, including a major part of its leadership. The rot had spread inside the whole Establishment, and what had originally appeared as a belated exercise in "de-Stalinisation" had gradually gathered a momentum of its own and had begun to undermine the very foundations of the Marxist system. When nothing short of naked force was deemed sufficient to stop the erosion, Moscow found out that the Czechoslovak C.P. had disintegrated. Not only was it unable to play its customary role in society, but it could not even give rise to an alternative leadership based on what the Soviets call "the sound core" of Leninists. Reluctantly, very reluctantly, the Kremlin had to engage half-a-million troops in a politically expensive operation—and even then found no choice but to leave Dubček and most of his "Reform Communists" nominally in charge. The actual process of "normalisation" could start only half-a-year later.

IN CERTAIN RESPECTS the current situation in the Polish Communist Party—in the Party, not in the nation!—resembles that in Czechoslovakia *after* rather than *before* the Warsaw Pact military intervention of August 1968. Polish Communists have passed through the "infantile disorder" of reforming Communism (or "revisionism" as it used to be called) much earlier, and in a much more thorough way, than their Czechoslovak comrades. In consequence, Polish politics as a whole became all but immune to this disease: the current troubles in Poland started *outside* the Party, brought about spontaneous activisation of various social strata independently of the Party, and on a scale unprecedented in any Communist-ruled country. Even though most of the working-class Party members have since joined the new independent trade unions—and a considerable number followed it by surrendering their Party-membership cards—the Party itself (and nowadays that means only its full-time *apparatus* plus a handful of activists) was only indirectly affected by the events.

A prominent intellectual leader of the Prague Spring (Antonin J. Liehm in an interview with George Urban) has explained that the Czechoslovak reformers had called for "the expropriation of the State." They allegedly had perceived their task to be "a thorough reform of the existing relationship between production and ownership, [whereby] property should have been taken out of the hands of the State and turned over to the Works Committees as the producers' rightful representatives." Whether or not this *ex post facto* rationalisation (and conclusions about the impact the Prague Spring has had upon "Euro-Communism") can be accepted is a separate question. The point is: no similar claim has ever been made by the leaders of the Polish Summer. Neither the working-class activists who have managed to turn the *ad hoc* inter-factory strike committees into a several-million-strong *Solidarity* movement, nor the secular and Catholic intellectuals who had prepared the ground in the political opposition and then advised the strikers on tactics, have ever set about to change the character of the Communist state—to provide it with "a human face." Whatever the impact the independent trade unions will have on the Communist-ruled society in Poland and elsewhere, "reform" was not their conscious intention. Richer by experience gained in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia (as well as in Poland in 1956, 1970, and 1976), they have abandoned all illusions that the Communist system could be reformed at all. Simultaneously, they realise that the régime cannot be toppled under the existing circumstances, at least as long as the Soviet system survives in Russia. They have, therefore, chosen the only solution left open to them: to stay out of politics, to leave the running of government and the national economy to the ruling Communist Party,

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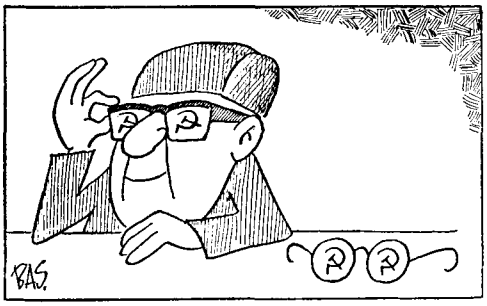
"The Classless Society"

or, Marie-Antoinette is Alive & Well . . . in Bielsko-Biala



Wyszkow

THE WAR AGAINST CORRUPTION *that was promised six months ago is beginning to look more like only a rearguard skirmish, but public anger at the abuses of power and privilege by Communist officialdom has not abated.*

Charges of wrongdoing by local officials, and charges that the central party administration was doing nothing about it, were major factors in many of the wildcat strikes that seized the country.

The local chapter of *Solidarity*, the independent trade union organization, in the southern town of Bielsko-Biala is continuing strikes because it wants administrators booted out of office for corruption.

ABOUT 67 Communist officials had been expelled from the Party for corruption by November, when the Party's "cleansing" purge was at its height, and 79 had received lesser penalties. But they are believed to represent only a minute fraction of those who fell under the spell of fast-and-easy money and lavish living under the deposed Party leader, Edward Gierek, and are still in power.

So far, relatively few scandals have erupted in public. But the private accusations continue, mostly involving luxurious villas for Communist officials in special hideaway communities. They clearly surpass anything that could be constructed on savings from salaries, and they are particularly irksome because Poland is in the grips of a housing crisis.

THE ACCUSATIONS *of corruption leveled by* **Solidarity** *leaders in Bielsko-Biala against officials there, including the governor, mayor and chief of police, include favoritism in handing out coupons for the speedy purchase of cars, furnishing private apartments at public expense, and the construction of lavish villas.*

For the residents of this small town 30 miles northeast of Warsaw, the anger is directed at a spectacular development of weekend cottages, hidden well off the main road at the end of a dirt track that stops in a pine forest. Local citizens call it "Bermuda."

SHIP AND ALL. *the secluded "Bermuda" compound of 100 or so Swiss-style chalets with wraparound balconies overlooking a picture-postcard lake was right where the muckrakers said it would be. Constructed out of richly grained natural wood, each house was separated by an identical wire fence, and the dirt streets out front were lighted by municipal street lamps, a strange sight in the middle of a forest.*

It was a blustery day, so only three or four owners were there, tending their property. They stared suspiciously at a foreign car. Their own cars bore licence plates with the telltale letters of government vehicles.

THERE ARE. *according to knowledgeable officials (and some former ones who resisted the temptation to enter into such schemes), literally scores of such "Bermudas" in Poland.*

"Multiply it by 49", said a former Party member. "In every province in the country first and second secretaries were doing the same thing. So were ministers, deputy ministers, secretaries, directors. It was only in the last two years they began buying seagoing yachts."

Party officials, he said, were offered low-interest state loans to buy land at special rates. They obtained construction materials at government rates, which are 50% cheaper than regular prices. After several months, the loans were canceled. Some officials moved on from house to house, getting richer as they went.

ONE PERSON *against whom action was taken was the former minister of building and building materials, Adam Glazur. He built a four-story dacha, worth as much as a half-million dollars, by using eight separate companies, which covered the cost from their own budgets. He was expelled from the Central Committee.*

"GIEREK genuinely thought the ruling party should have some of these luxuries", theorized a Party member. "He believed that life was getting better for the People, so why not for the Party? He loved to invite Giscard to a private lodge for boar hunting, and when he went to France on a state visit, and stayed at Marie-Antoinette's cottage, it turned his head."

John Darnton

in the NEW YORK TIMES

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and to create an independent force whose sole aim is to defend the interests of the working people against their employer—the State.

As a matter of fact, in present-day Poland we are confronted—for the first time in any Communist-ruled country—with a genuine alternative leadership which did not grow up inside the Establishment. With very few exceptions (like some older members of KOR) there are no disillusioned Communists among the new leaders; no Marxists, lapsed or otherwise; no Left-wing intellectuals bent upon ameliorating the distorted Soviet model. Nobody cares about dialectical differences between the younger and the older Marx; nobody gives a damn whether Lenin was faithful to Marxist doctrine or whether Stalin twisted Bolshevik ideals. They do not even understand the Orwellian "Newspeak", which for several generations has been the *lingua franca* of the international Left. Asked by a West German TV interviewer "how the independent trade unions fit into the socialist system", their chairman, Lech Walesa, replied: "We want to be masters in our house—I want to have my trade unions—I do not care about the system. . . ." In a BBC interview, Walesa, asked "whether Communism is compatible with free trade unions", explained:

> "I don't believe in definitions. Call it what you will, but it has to be efficient. It has to function. If something gets jammed and breaks down, then we either throw it away or do something else. Since I have got experience of 1956, 1970, 1976, and now 1980, I know that these breakdowns are ever more frequent. There is little point in carrying out repairs. We might as well buy a new machine. . . ."

AS A RESULT OF such a down-to-earth approach to Poland's most pressing problems, current developments might be considered a turning-point in the history of Communist-ruled countries of Eastern Europe. They do not, however, properly belong to the history of the international Communist movement. Strikes in Poland might spell trouble for Soviet imperial interests, but they are hardly concerned with Communist doctrine. Most Left-wing intellectuals in the West still have not grasped that fact. They feel uneasy because of the deep religious feelings displayed by Lech Walesa and his comrades-in-arms, without realising that—as a KOR representative in France has put it—having discarded the distorted language of State Communism, the Polish workers, who were "trying to reconstruct social links against the Leviathan State-party and independently of it, availed themselves of the only public language which they considered genuine, because it had never been manipulated or tainted by propaganda. . . ."—the language of the Roman Catholic Church, to which the great majority of Poles owe allegiance.

"Defending the workers' interests" against their employers, without getting involved in fundamental political issues, and especially without trying to change the existing political system—that is what classic orthodox trade-unionism in the free world is all about. In a Communist-ruled country such a posture has revolutionary implications, and not only because the State is the sole employer.

*

> *". . . And Jan Pietrzak, Poland's hugely popular political satirist, draws delighted laughter at his crowded cabaret performances when he remarks that 'many ministers have had to learn to write because they now have to sign agreements with workers'. . . ."*
>
> NEWS ITEM (*Warsaw*)

DESPITE OBJECTIONS raised in recent years by some political writers and scholars in the West, the essence of the Communist system cannot be fully understood without recourse to the concept of "Totalitarianism." Not all Communist-ruled countries are, or have ever been, completely totalitarian; even in the Soviet Union under Stalin there were still some areas of social and cultural life which remained relatively free from the Bolsheviks' monopoly of power. This has been even more true in Poland, where the Church, private agriculture, and a considerable part of cultural activity had managed to escape the absolute *Gleichschaltung* to which all Communist rule tends. That does not necessarily mean that such a system could become, in the long term, reconciled with the continuing existence of "independent self-governing" trade unions, as specified in the Gdansk agreement. On the contrary, it seems safe to assume that the Communist rulers will do their best to regain their lost positions. They will try to dismantle the independent unions, without, as far as possible, using brute force, either with domestic coercion or through a call for "fraternal aid." Recent months have brought abundant evidence on that score.

From the very beginning the striking workers and their leaders were fully aware that both economic and systemic concessions wrested from the Communist state had been accepted by the Party and the government not "in good faith" but under pressure of necessity. Regular radio

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broadcasts of Sunday Mass—or the unveiling of a monument to workers "martyred" during the 1970 killings in the Baltic ports—were spectacular gestures which went a long way toward appeasing the unions at a minimal cost to authorities. The same, however, cannot be said of the lavish promises in the economic and social domain. Some of them were evidently unworkable in the depressed economic situation in which Poland had been plunged by several disastrous decades of Communist mismanagement. There was even less reason to suppose that the Party would keep its word concerning some other terms of the Gdansk "social contract", which were due to have deep repercussions on the political scene. On the contrary, the lessons learned during the previous upheavals confirmed the conviction that the Party was only biding its time, that as soon as it regained its strength and cohesion, it would start to backpedal.

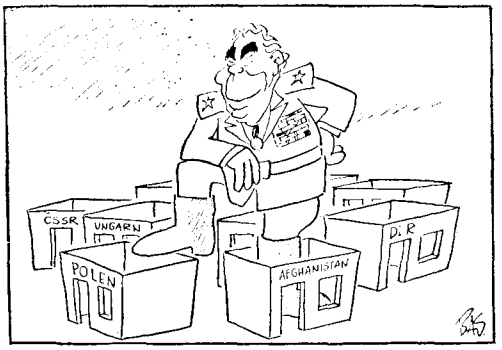
It was, therefore, no mean achievement that the accords signed in Gdansk, Szczecin, and Silesia contained—in addition to promises whose fulfilment depended largely on the goodwill of the Party—institutional safeguards as well. In particular, they included the formal recognition of free trade unions, independent of the Party and employers, able to enforce their demands and defend workers' rights by resorting to their most effective weapon (shortly to be officially legalised)—the work stoppage. It might be worthwhile to recall that the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, for all its enormous influence, has never been able to wrench from the ruling class of Communists a formal recognition of its own legal, corporate status. The workers, by downing their tools and raising the spectre of a general strike, managed to achieve this objective in a matter of several weeks. Between eight and ten million workers had joined the new unions even before the organisers set about their work.

OTHER SOCIAL GROUPS have now begun to follow in the workers' footsteps: student and youth organisations, farmer associations, professional bodies, even Catholic believers and the Church hierarchy. These groups lack the "clout" that industrial workers have in a modern society. None the less, by creating autonomous structures, they contribute to a measure of social, if not yet political, pluralism. They, too, may eventually become effective pressure groups which the rulers will ignore at their peril.

AMONG THE 21 points of the agreements which ended the first wave of strikes in Poland, one is conspicuous by its absence: nowhere was the traditional demand for "workers' self-management in industry" voiced. This was in no way an accidental omission.

Self-management, or workers' participation in industrial administration, at least at the factory level, played a very important role in earlier confrontations: in 1945 (when socialist-dominated works councils were quickly emasculated by the Communist Party) and again in 1956 and 1970, in Poland as well as in Hungary, and especially in Czechoslovakia. The so-called "Yugoslav model" is still passionately discussed by Euro-Communists and Left-wing intellectuals in the West. But in 1980, Polish workers, drawing on their past

"No Experiments"



EAST GERMANY'S *Communist rulers have watched the Polish crisis unfold with growing anxiety, fearing that the demonstration-effect of events across the border could inspire a workers' revolt in their country too.*

East German official nervousness has also been reflected in tighter security measures and a spate of political speeches calling for a new "ideological offensive" and for "increased vigilance against counter-revolutionary activities."

At the root of popular dissatisfaction is the abysmal performance of the East German economy under centralised state management. The failure of State Planning was admitted fairly candidly by a number of regional SED leaders on Jan 10, when the district Party conferences were held.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that SED hardliners have reportedly warned the Russians that, if the East German people see the Poles being permitted to establish genuine trade union liberties, they will face intense pressure for reform as well.

An end to the Polish "experiment", however brutal, would undoubtedly be welcomed by the East German leadership.

Robert Moss
in THE DAILY TELEGRAPH *(London)*

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experience (i.e. total disillusionment with the legal fiction of sharing responsibility without being able at the same time to influence actual decisions), did not even raise the issue. The lack of concern for the "self-management" problem passed virtually unnoticed by foreign observers and commentators. It is, none the less, highly significant for the new relationship taking shape between the workers (and other social groups) and the State they have to live with.

It will be remembered that the "Strike Committees", while disclaiming any ambition to become an oppositional political party, only reluctantly agreed to reaffirm their acknowledgement of the State Constitution, with its principles of "the leading role of the Communist Party" and "eternal alliance and friendship with the Soviet Union." Some of the strikers still remained unconvinced; and the authorities' attempt to include those principles in the statute of the *Solidarity* trade unions very nearly provoked a new general strike all over Poland. Finally, the text of the original formula was attached as one of the annexes to the statute. This was widely interpreted as a kind of mutual concession; but, taken together with the omission of the demand for industrial self-management, it shows a conscious choice on the part of the new workers' leadership: not to get politically involved, but not to allow political interference in the trade-union movement either.

BY AN IRONICAL QUIRK of history, at present it is the Communist Party and the officially inspired mass media who call upon the independent unions to become full-fledged "partners" in running industry and, by extension, the country. According to the standard argument, the unions cannot remain indifferent to Poland's economic plight. They cannot claim the right to share in deciding how the national income is going to be distributed without also sharing responsibility for sustaining economic growth. The principle has been included in the draft proposal for structural economic reforms. The unions, however, formally rejected the invitation to participate in the Party-Government commission created to submit the blueprints for reforms, refusing to be associated with another attempt at obfuscation carried out by the same people who in the past had brought Poland to the brink of disaster. Only a few economists, who had served as *Solidarity* advisers, took part in the deliberations in their private capacity.

At first glance, the Party arguments for "partnership" seem persuasive enough. Trade-union power without responsibility has brought about rather unsavoury experiences in other countries, including Great Britain. The analogy, however, is faulty. In "other countries" there is no Party monopoly of political power and no over-centralised "command economy." Had the Polish independent trade unions accepted the "partner" status envisaged by the Party, they would not only have to renounce their autonomy, but assume the role traditionally assigned to the trade-union movement under Communist rule: that of "a school of Communism", of "the Party's transmission belt to the masses", above all, that of an instrument of mass mobilisation to increase productivity. Instead of defending the workers' rights against the sole employer, the Party-State—instead of demanding higher wages, shorter work time, better social conditions and services—they would have to urge their members to fulfil quotas and plans drawn up without their participation.

There was a foretaste of such a development in the recent clash concerning "work on Saturdays." The obligation to introduce immediately a 5-day, 40-hour work-week was one of the unrealistic promises given by the Government to the strikers (in August 1980) in order to induce them to resume work as soon as possible. It seems rather doubtful whether the negotiators ever believed this promise could be kept; anyhow, there were good grounds, freely admitted by the *Solidarity* leaders, for postponing the reform, at least until the worst of the economic crisis was over.

The authorities apparently considered it beneath their ideological dignity to consult the unions on a matter of vital interest to the workers; they preferred an administrative *ukase* instead. The results were fairly easy to guess. The workers, after all, could not be blamed for the mess the Polish economy was in; and if the unions were to be influenced by *raison d'état*, either political or economic, nobody at all would be left to fend for the workers' rights. The "social contract" implicitly provided that the Party would retain its monopoly of political and State power, while the unions would speak and act for labour. That is clearly an adversary relationship, not one of partnership; and the *Solidarity* movement was surely right to stick to its guns.

ON THE OTHER HAND, the dividing line between the sham "partnership", as posited by the Party, and the adversary relationship between the State employer and the independently-organised workers is not all that clear-cut. How can the unions

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discharge their self-defined duties without a modicum of political freedom and democracy? Hence their demands, for instance, for relaxation of censorship, for unfettered access to the mass media for themselves (as well as for opposition groups and the Church), for equal opportunities for religious believers, and for an end to police harassment of intellectual dissidents. These are undoubtedly political demands. The Party leadership has been forced—by the sheer momentum of the strike movement—to concede them, and thus to accept—at least verbally—a certain limitation of its virtually absolute rule. In the highly improbable case of the Party remaining faithful to the spirit and the letter of the social contract, the authorities would have had the right to call upon the unions for an increased share of responsibility for the country's fate. But, for the time being, the Party leadership has not done much to increase its credibility. The "hard-liners" have never become really reconciled to any kind of restraint on their monopoly of power; this attitude is supported by the *apparatus* which naturally enough resists the loss of influence and of the privileges which go with it.

*

"An agenda for a reform programme, which the Gdansk officials want presented at the National Party Congress in the spring, calls for high Party officials to spend one week a year living as ordinary Polish workers. They want officials to live in the seedy bachelor hotels maintained for single workers; to ride on the decrepit transportation system; and to be treated by the poorly equipped national health service. . . ."

NEWS ITEM *(Warsaw)*

THE RADICAL MOOD which prevails among the rank-and-file members of the new unions exacerbates the situation still further. The *Solidarity* leadership, and the political opposition groups which support it, try to draw a line between justified economic and social demands of the unions, and purely political pressure exercised in areas which are supposed to remain the Party's preserve. The workers, however, are not always prepared to respect this subtle distinction. In some cases wildcat strikes, or threats of strikes, were used to enforce the dismissal of state and even Party officials, blamed for their high-handedness towards workers, or deemed to be corrupt.

The campaign against corruption, initiated by the Party in order to shift the blame on to a handful of discredited leaders "from the Gierek era" and to enhance the legitimacy of the new Polish team, turned against the Party and State *apparatus* as a whole—and has lately been abandoned. The union leadership, in trying to curtail the spontaneous pressure "from below", risk losing their grass-roots support. Frustrated *apparatchiki*, however, faced with a possible loss of their soft jobs (and often not trained to earn their living in any other way), can turn nasty and not only attempt to put the clock back but *in extremis* even to invoke "fraternal aid" from outside the country. This is a real threat, and it has always to be borne in mind, especially since such frustrations are being encouraged by the Soviets.

ALL THESE DEVELOPMENTS have been occurring against the background of unprecedented economic disaster, which here can be mentioned only parenthetically. 24,000 million dollars in debts to the West alone—a large part of it frozen in unnecessary investment, often on projects that were started but not completed and therefore are unproductive—is only one side of the coin. Hour-long queuing before empty shops . . . rationing of scarce food staples . . . power-cuts and coal-shortages which disrupt industry and transport, and leave cities without light or heat . . . the prospect of one million unemployed with no dole . . . raging inflation when nominally increased wages disrupt a market clean-swept of consumer goods—such are some of the results achieved after more than three decades of "Socialist Construction" in post-War Poland.

THE COMMUNISTS IN CHARGE have been unable to propose any solution of the crisis other than an heroic dose of "austerity." Nothing better can be expected of people who, despite their obvious lack of elementary competence, desperately cling to power; unfortunately, they are indeed irreplaceable. But, surprisingly enough, their arguments have found uncritical support in some Western circles—by no means only among the bankers anxious to recover their lavishly-bestowed credits, or the "scaremongers" who have been fearful that "Gdansk 1980" may turn into a repetition of "Danzig 1939." Even the tired cliché of "*Polnische Wirtschaft*" (the old contemptuous German phrase for chaos) has re-emerged, directed not, as it well might be, against Poland's rulers but against the population which allegedly is guilty of sloth and living above their means.

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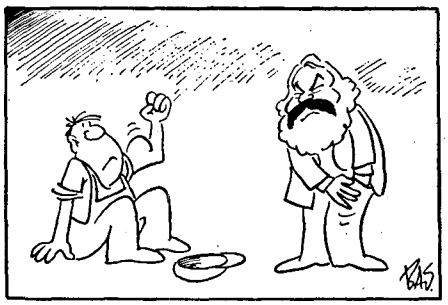
The Vicious Circle



THERE *is now no obvious way out.*

In 1956 Mr Gomulka, benefiting from the dethronement of Stalin, could hold the Soviet forces at bay while he handed land back to the peasants, made concessions to the Church, relaxed censorship, and even allowed the formation of workers' councils (which were then gradually rendered impotent).

The riots of 1970 also brought in a new government, that of Mr Gierek, this time with ambitious promises of economic modernization. When these were not fulfilled the riots of 1976 were ended by the simple expedient of giving in to the demand that price increases be rescinded.

THE PRESENT CRISIS is more complex, not only because the country is in an almost hopeless economic mess, but also because there is so little belief in remedies. Either they have been tried and have failed or they require changes in the system which are thought to be unacceptable.

The Party, having manifestly failed to solve the nation's problems, must now involve the people and trust them with more freedom, including elements of genuine representation. But this is the last thing for which the system is designed, and the last thing the Soviet Union would want.

If there is one constant principle in the Soviet model of communism it is that the people are not to be trusted. All power must be firmly in the hands of the Party leadership and must be transmitted downwards from the top, never upwards from the bottom.

THE SYSTEM has not justified itself. This is one reason why democratization is always felt to be too dangerous in practice.

The result is a vicious circle. The absence of democracy alienates the people and deepens the crisis of the system which then makes the régime even more afraid of the people.

THE TIMES *(London)*

It is indeed possible that, even with generous assistance from East and West, the Polish economy cannot be effectively cured without radical and painful belt-tightening. But can the workers, the farmers, and the white-collar employees be expected simply to accept such a solution? Will they agree to pay so heavily for sins not of their own making?

They may be forced to—by recourse to a rule of totalitarian terror. That was, after all, the prescription used by Stalin to "modernise" Russia, and then repeated—if only for a relatively short time and on a much more modest scale—in all the East European countries of "People's Democracy." In Poland, however, there are at present no forces capable of effectively subduing and terrorising a nation that is determined more than ever to defend its existence. At the end of World War II, several years—as well as the physical presence of innumerable divisions of the Soviet Army (and the NKVD, as it then was)—were needed to overcome the resistance of a nation whose vitality had been sapped by the Nazi occupation with its concomitant policy of genocide. It seems doubtful whether anybody in his right mind will be eager to repeat this feat—even if all other considerations were discounted.

*

Warsaw

"There is plenty of cake to eat in Poland, but not enough bread. The reason: Cake is produced by small, private bakers, far more efficient than the state-controlled bread bakeries. The government is loath to allow the private firms to make bread, because to do so would be to admit that state socialism has again failed to deliver the goods."

JONATHAN SPIVAK, WALL STREET JOURNAL

IN MY VIEW, it is much more probable that the Communist Party in Poland will prefer—as it has in the past—to bid for time by combining coercion with persuasion. The recent personnel changes in the government, part of a permanent purge which has been going on unabated ever since the second half of August 1980, certainly seem to point in this direction. The *Politburo* hardliners, itching for a showdown, suffered, temporarily at least, a setback. Putting a four-star general, although reputed to be an opponent of the use of force, at the head of the council of ministers does not only signal a warning that force can, after all, be used to prevent the disintegration of the existing structures; it is, at the same time, an obvious appeal for self-imposed discipline and voluntary sacrifices in the name of patriotism and traditional respect for the

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military. A similar message has been conveyed by appointing, as Deputy Prime Minister in charge of negotiations with the unions, a journalist who for over a quarter of a century had assiduously been polishing his image, at home and abroad, as a liberal Communist—a contradiction in terms, if ever there was one. Still, those nominations went down fairly well with the labour leaders, not to the point of renouncing the strike weapon, which in the absence of any other institutional safeguards would amount to unilateral disarmament and capitulation, but sufficiently to suspend the use of strikes except as a defensive device of last resort.

But will the grassroots accept a lasting truce on such terms? The party *apparatus* obviously hopes to overcome the popular resistance by exploiting the unavoidable fatigue of the population, by corrupting or compromising the inexperienced labour leaders, by setting at variance different worker categories and driving a wedge between workers and intellectuals, perhaps even by use of selective police reprisals. Such policies would probably not pass unchallenged, because of the irrevocable credibility gap between the rulers and the ruled in Poland and because of the unprecedented radicalisation of the masses. It might be worthwhile to remember that it was Rosa Luxemburg who rejected Lenin's doctrine of a conspiratorial vanguard party, and advocated the general strike as the workers' ultimate weapon. Indeed, in the 1920s and 1930s, occupation ("sit-in") strikes were known all over Europe as "Polish strikes."

FOR THE TIME BEING, the Polish Communist leaders in charge have become reconciled, verbally at least, to self-governing trade unions. They have even urged the Church hierarchy to give its blessing to a Catholic political grouping, advocating cooperation with the Communists but not run by them. At first glance, wholehearted acceptance of such independent centres of social activity by a ruling Communist Party hardly seems possible without further dismantlement of the semi-totalitarian state structure—but then, did anybody, thirty years ago, seriously believe Communism could accommodate the moral authority of the Roman Catholic Church? Would Moscow tolerate it? It goes against the grain—but Poland has taken private agriculture, along with a great deal of anti-Russian nationalism, in its stride. In politics the limits of what is possible are often unknown unless tested, even though the testing may involve a very high degree of risk.

As far as one can tell at the moment, Poland is in for a protracted tug-of-war. Whatever the final results may be, its impact—not only on the domestic scene but in its international dimensions as well—can hardly be exaggerated.

Roundabout

Cars arrive and leave
Crazed by a trail
They lose, pick up again.
Buildings shove forward
For attention
As hands at a deafening meeting
Stay up and up to catch the eye.

A statue with its gesture
Feels the air
Smiling as in
A blindfold game,
Unaware
That everyone goes by.
Fighting the flowers is a smell like guns.

Patrick Hare

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Peter Porter

Venetian Incident

I take for my sermon a Sunday
in Venice, walking from the dazed hotel
along the shortest way
to the Salute, and then, as so often, propelled
by my Britannic bowels, forced to take
a red-white-and-blue trip back
to our room, and you, rather than make
a fuss, said you'd meet me at the Anglican Church
on Campo San Vio (I found
the name in the Pisan pages of Pound
and it moved me more than I guessed
such a glossing reference could)—
My intestines are a species' research,
but soon enough I entered, a guest
of the Low Church sort in the House of God
and saw you cheerfully raising and lowering,
along with some seven people and a dog,
in a ritual just short of Rome
and the priest, camply flowering
through the familiar words. You were home,
a devoted unbeliever but English and real—
I a frightened sceptic
ever willing to make a coward's deal
but till then too stiff and quick
to be at ease in High Church mysteries.
"I know my way through Holy Communion
by heart, ever since that awful Father John
taught us at Grangehurst." Your words,
your dispensation. But God was pleased.
How do I know? Because, even if he doesn't exist,
he likes us to try to belong,
and though you were not relaxed in his world
and needed by lunch to be pissed
your lightness at living and dying expressed
Creation's plain tenure, the warrant of birds.
I saw then that those who cling to their life
are death's real retainers, that the Mass
mumbled and bobbed through is counted a pass—
I could outlive my wife
but never be natured into the space
which she proprietored.
It will never be sufficient to speak of
the peace following after;
some text must be found to remove
the permanent discord
which flesh sets on flesh. Whence comes the need

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for punishment, as native to liberal souls
as to Savonarolas? Our minds breed
a cancer of starting—from God or Black Holes
we surge into certainty and thence
to eternity, dying and dying and dying
and always the wrong side of the fence.
It was joy then to pause on the path
at things coming round once more,
some words and some gestures, familiar and hollow,
a welcoming door,
the voice of our language and our sort of dogs,
expatriate ladies that cats learn to follow,
a chance of forgiving
with Venice behind us, like us exhausted
by life, and pleased to be living.

Fleur Adcock

In the Unicorn, Ambleside

I want to have ice-skates and a hoop
and to have lived all my life in the same house
above Stock; and to skate on Lily Tarn
every winter, because it always freezes—
or always did freeze when you were a girl.

I want to believe your tales about Wordsworth—
"Listen to what the locals say" you tell me:
"He drank in every pub from here to Ullswater,
and had half the girls. We all know that."
I want not to know better, out of books.

I sit in the pub with my posh friends, talking
literature and publishing as usual.
Some of them really do admire Wordsworth.
But they won't listen to you. I listen:
how can I get you to listen to me?

I can't help not being local;
but I'm here, aren't I? And this afternoon
Jane and I sat beside Lily Tarn
watching the bright wind attack the ice.
None of you were up there skating.

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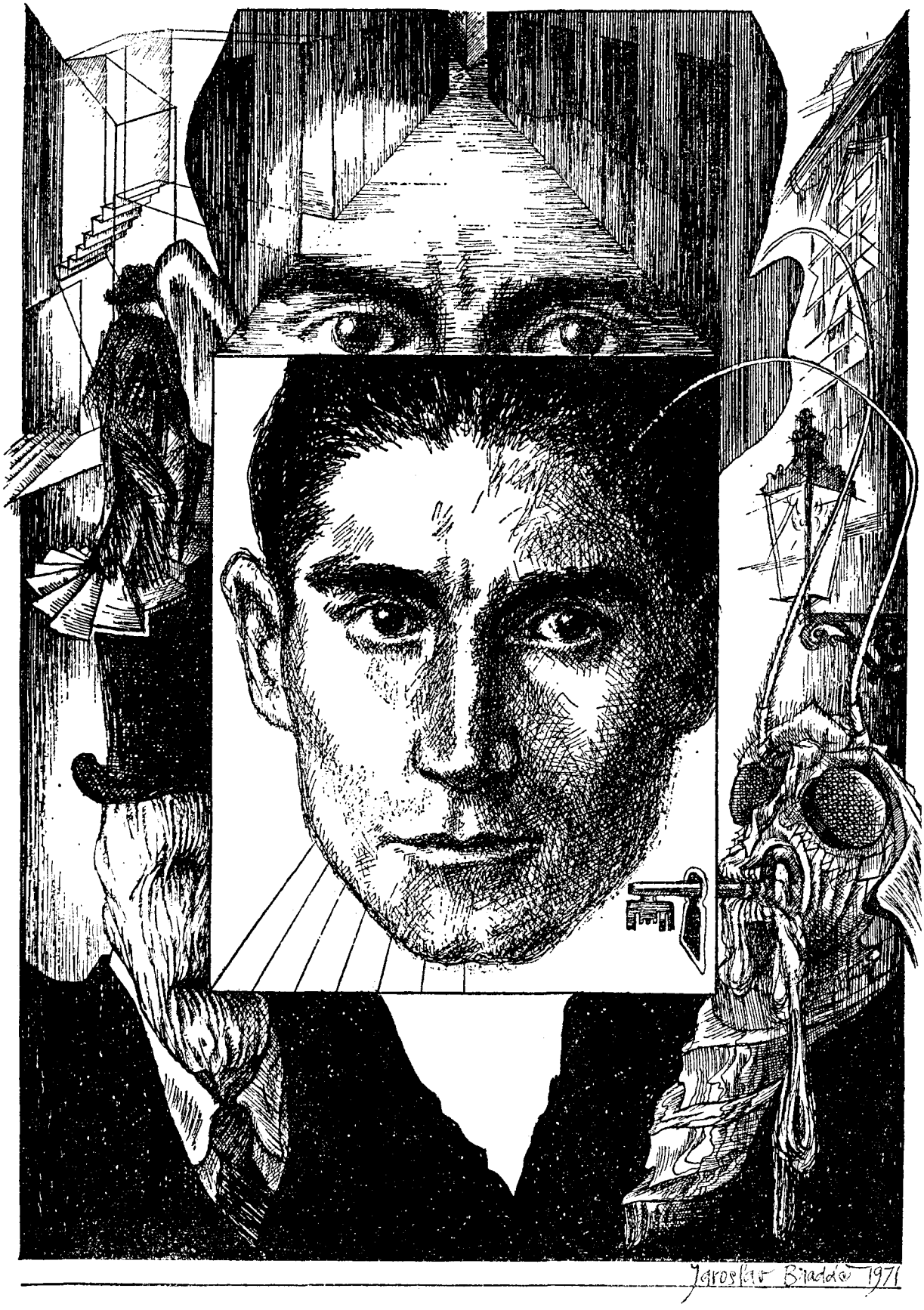

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Ronald Hayman

In Search of Kafka

Berlin, Prague, Vienna, London, Tel Aviv

4 June, Berlin

I TRY TO RESIST the idea that writing a biography of Kafka is going to attract Kafkaesque events to me, but the meeting with Klaus Wagenbach is progressively absurd from the moment that the doorbell produces a chiming tune. His book on Kafka's early years is more detailed and intelligent than Max Brod's biography; and, having to lecture in Berlin, I thought it would be worth while to look him up. But the appointment is fixed for only two hours before I'm due at the university, and when I arrive at what looks like a flat, it turns out to be an office—he's a publisher—and he isn't there. I'm invited to wait in his room. A boy comes in to say he'll be here in ten minutes. Half an hour later he appears. He had a late night, he explains; was still asleep when they telephoned to say I'd arrived. What can he do for me? But he insists on making coffee himself and disappears, losing ten more of the minutes I'd expected to be valuable.

I ask why he never completed his biography. He says he spent seven years on the book, which covers the first 29 years of Kafka's life. After that he felt he'd done his bit. Seven years is a long time when you're young. Anyway, publishing is his business. (He gestures around the room, which is full of evidence.) There were no large-scale German editions of *The Trial* and *The Castle* until the beginning of the 1950s and it was through reading proofs in 1951 that he became excited, seeing what a challenge the work would constitute to the way German literature was being studied. He cycled from Berlin to Paris, where Kafka's friend Dora Dymant was living.

I ask for advice on what to do and who to see in Prague, Vienna, Tel Aviv. He'd have gone to Palestine, he says, but was warned not to. It was too soon after the war; as a German he might have got himself shot. In Prague I should go to the Jewish Museum. "But be careful not to mention Kafka's name. He's totally taboo."

6 June, Prague

DRIVING INTO PRAGUE you realise almost immediately that there's little value in any of the speculation about whether the castle in Kafka's *Castle* was based on the castle in Wossek or the one in Friedland (which looked different, depending on whether you viewed it from the plain, the park or the woods). The castle that obviously mattered most to Kafka was the castle in Prague, which must still matter enormously to anyone who lives there. On the west bank of the Moldau a long flat hill lifts the superb castle and the spiky cathedral high above the surrounding city, a constant reminder of imperial domination, backed by the church. I must find out who lived in the castle during Kafka's lifetime.

The Hotel Olympik, a mammoth Soviet-style sub-Hilton. Are telephone calls monitored? was it a mistake to mention Kafka on my visa application? is the telephonist actually ringing the numbers I'm asking for? can there really be no reply on any of them?

7 June

SUCCESS finally, in contacting Vera Saudková, Kafka's niece, elder daughter of his favourite sister, Ottla, the youngest of the three, who all died in concentration camps. Vera offers to come to the hotel. I'd never find my way to her house, she says. "Even taxi-drivers get lost." I promise to wait for her in the hall. How will I know her? "I'm old and grey", she says.

It's easy to know her because her face is more alert and alive than any other I've seen in Prague, an open face, making no secret of sadness or suffering. But there's still energy and inexhaustible kindness. What would I like to do—should she act as my guide? show me the houses that the Kafka family lived in? She's very considerate. Do I mind if she smokes in the car? She gets through more cigarettes, she says, when speaking in German than when speaking in Czech ... though really she doesn't want to speak at all about the family. Why can't it all be forgotten? So many people come to question her, but she was four when Kafka died and can't differentiate what she remembers from what people have told her. Her mother was always

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talking about him. What books he liked, what food. He always told her what to read: Goethe and Kleist mostly. Vera, though educated in Czech, studied German, and learned by heart some of the poems Kafka had recommended to Ottla. Food he didn't really like at all. He was thin; and Mother was a Jewish girl with a good appetite, not thin. But because of him she became a vegetarian and remained one, even when she was cooking meat twice a day for Grandfather.

I soon see why Kafka felt more relaxed with Ottla than with anyone else. Vera has inherited her mother's talent for empathy. Considerateness is carried to an extraordinary length: genuine concern with the other person's needs, willingness to take any amount of trouble.

We drive to the Alchimistengässchen, a narrow street near the castle, where Ottla rented a tiny house in 1916. I'm surprised to see a plaque outside it. Kafka went there every day to write, but she never told him why she'd rented it. She needed somewhere to meet her lover, Josef David. She wasn't expecting to marry him: he was a Christian, and a poor one at that. But Kafka encouraged her to defy their parents, and she did.

David was a Czech nationalist, and his career improved when an independent Czechoslovakia emerged in 1918. He didn't really want to marry her, and it was disadvantageous for him to have a Jewish wife. Anyway he wanted a son, and she had two daughters. After the second was born he wouldn't speak to her. As children, Vera and her sister lived in fear that he'd kill her. Terrible shouting and threats. He got furious when she invited beggars and disreputable-looking people into the house. She had to hide them if he came home unexpectedly.

During the Nazi period he was under pressure to divorce her. If he'd refused, he'd have lost his job and they'd both have been sent to a concentration camp, but they could have come out of it alive, as other couples did. After being divorced, she was sent to Theresienstadt, and then to Auschwitz. Thanks to a Czech guard, who smuggled letters out, she could write home, but it was impossible to send her food or stockings. For years after the end of the War, Vera and her sister went on believing that she was still alive, that one day the telephone would ring and they'd hear her voice. They took turns to stay in the house, so that the telephone would never be unanswered. For years they called their father a murderer, and wouldn't speak to him.

We eat lunch in a restaurant near the Alchimistengässchen. She speaks affectionately of her grandfather, and of his enormous love for his wife. He always wanted her to be with him. "I can still picture her in the cashier's box at the shop." Kafka's letter to his father was literature. Really there was more love than hatred. Of course there were problems between them, but the old man was broken when his only son died. Sold the business because there was no hope his son would ever go into it. Bought a house where the family could live together. Very kind to his grandchildren. Tactful. Gentle.

After lunch we drive to her big house on the edge of the city. The mastiff is called Kent after the character in *King Lear*. Her husband, now dead, translated Shakespeare into Czech, and there's still some royalty income. She translated Walter Benjamin, and until recently worked for a publisher.

Rummaging through a drawer for photographs to show me, she finds the ones of Kafka produced when he was briefly reinstated during the Dubček period; and she goes on searching for older ones. Very few remain (she gave most of them to Wagenbach). Finding a 60-year-old photograph of Ottla, she points to a scarcely visible bulge in the stomach. "That's me."

She tells me about the suicide of her uncle Rudolf, who served as Kafka's model in the story "A Country Doctor." He had morphine in his possession, and when life under the Nazis became intolerable, injected himself with it. She and her sister found him in his room with his head slumped over his arm. She demonstrates his position. He's still breathing. They decide not to call a doctor. He's old. Why should he be revived against his will? They leave him for six hours. When they come back, he's dead. She's 16, her sister 14.

I wonder how much better off she is in Prague now than he was then. She had one chance of settling in London, spent three days there with her children, but they wanted to go home. They missed their dog, and they'd left the urns containing the ashes of their father and their brother. Now she'll never get out.

SHE TALKS OF INACCURACIES in Max Brod's biography of Kafka. His datings were erratic. "But everyone fell in love with Brod. He was so nice. Are you going to meet Esther Hoffe? She was totally involved—'Maxi, we won't go out this evening. Maxi, you don't want that drink. . . .'" Brod's friendship with Kafka cooled off towards the end. He was jealous of Robert Klopstock, who was a doctor and therefore better able to help Kafka. The family was also suspicious of Klopstock because he was a Hungarian and therefore likely to prescribe the wrong medicines. They also disapproved of Dora Dymant, because she was from Eastern Europe. She wouldn't know what food to cook for him. He needed soft food; hers would be hard. Anyway they shouldn't be living together when they weren't married.

Just before leaving I ask Vera whether there's anything I can send her which she can't get in Prague.

"Freedom."

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8 June

HAVING seen so many black and white photographs of Prague during Kafka's lifetime, I wasn't prepared for the streets and buildings to be so colourful. But I wasn't expecting the people to be so grey. Faces are lifeless, defeated, self-effacing. Even children walk about the streets as though they want to avoid being noticed. The pre-War hotels are derelict, dusty, dead: the state travel agency, *Cedok*, funnels all the tourist trade into the "Interhotels." The shops—even in the busiest streets, which aren't at all busy—display unalluring jars of sausages and beans. The window display in the most luxurious shop I've seen consists of washing-machines and fridges stockpiled with equally unexciting food.

Meeting with Frantisek K., now pensioned off from a job in a literary institute. He's 53, but looks older and very frail. Apparently nervous of talking in the hotel, he proposes a walk. We drive to the old city and walk there. He remembers pre-War Prague as much cleaner.

He spent years on a book about Kafka, which he isn't allowed to publish. The only book about him on sale in Prague comes from East Germany, and Kafka's books aren't available in the libraries.

Frantisek's theory is that *The Trial* had its roots in a trial Kafka read about in the newspapers. He tells me that when Kafka wrote in Czech—letters to his boss, for instance—he made no mistakes at all.

He says no one is certain which house in Alchimistengässchen Ottla rented. What about the plaque? "That's done for tourists."

9 June

JIRI S., a teacher, says the castle was empty during Kafka's lifetime.

Very pessimistic about the future, he thinks everyday events in Prague are more "Kafkaesque" now than ever. For instance, part of a street was closed not long ago, when a corrugated iron fence was put up in the middle. Nothing else happened. Citizens of Prague are slow to complain, but eventually questions were asked about when the work would be finished. The public works department now had a new director who couldn't find any information in his predecessor's files about why the fence had been put up, who the workmen were, or what work needed to be done. Some weeks later the fence was taken down.

10 June, Vienna

IT'S a relief to have crossed the border; its good to see people enjoying themselves.

Prague seems drab and villagey in comparison. In the closed and carless Kärtnerstrasse, Americans and Austrians busk with guitars or accordions or flutes. Crowds circle round them. Pastries, coffee; lovers saunter arm-in-arm. Single girls peer disconsolately into dress shops, dreaming of the man who'd buy everything they need to transform their lives. German and American tourists try to impress each other with loud talk. Crude, vulgar, materialistic? Yes. Elegant? Occasionally. But at least people are having fun.

Letter from Frau Hoffe. She'll be going back to Tel Aviv in the middle of June but can't see me there till the last week. She'll need several days to reaccustom herself to the heat. Annoying: I'd hoped to fly straight on from Vienna. Now I'll have to go back to London in between.

12 June

SOMETIMES YOU FIND the unlikeliest things in the likeliest places: there's an unpublished Kafka letter in the Autograph Collection of the Austrian National Library. It's a typed reply to an unnamed patriot who was apparently trying to involve him in campaigning.

> "Really I'm not in a position to make my mind up about a spiritually and culturally united Austria and still less to think of myself as completely belonging to it. I'm very nervous of any such commitment.... I have no talents as an organiser, my circle of acquaintances is limited, I have no kind of significant influence.... If, as will perhaps be unavoidable, your organisation is made into a society with membership subscriptions and so on, I will gladly become a member."

The date is 8 March 1917 and it shows that Kafka was by then much more ambivalent than he'd been in the spring of 1915, when he wanted to be called up, or in November 1915 when he became very excited about buying war-bonds.

13 June

WENDELIN SCHMITT-DENGLER tells me there are still some old ladies alive who knew Milena Jesenská-Polak, but have nothing to say except how wonderful she was. Her lover, the Graf von Schaffgotsch, is dead, and in any case would have refused to discuss her. Kafka met him, but the Count probably wasn't yet her lover.

14 June

EXTRAORDINARY that these two men, Norbert Winkler and Hans Gruber, should have taken the initiative to form a Franz Kafka Society. Both are genial, middle-aged, energetic, well-meaning,

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with broad Austrian accents. They live in Klosterneuberg, where Kafka died at the Kierling Sanatorium, and they're raising enough money to buy the house, which is now a block of flats, and convert it into an archive and museum. Winkler, a schoolteacher who keeps bees, drives me to have coffee in Klosterneuberg with Gruber, who drinks his out of a mug marked HANS. Why should the house a man dies in, they argue, be any less important than the house he's born in? And if nothing's being done for Kafka in Prague or Vienna, something must be done here. Gruber lives in the same road as the former sanatorium, and afterwards we go across to look at it. Winkler sniffs. Isn't there something about the atmosphere of the place that tells you a lot of people have come here to die? We meet one of the flat tenants, an old woman who used to work for Dr Hoffmann, owner of the sanatorium. Kafka described him as a "sick old gentleman." She shows me postcard photographs of the place as it used to be: it's like looking at a brochure for a morgue.

17 June, London

STRANGE TO BE SITTING at this desk, instead of flying on to Tel Aviv. It would be hard to concentrate on anything I wasn't really enjoying, but work on the script for Radio 3 takes me round to another side of the same problem—how to make maps for Kafka country. *Kafka and His Father* is probably the best title, though the programme's less about the external relationship than about the effects on the son of having a father like that, and about the outsider's difficulties in forming an impression of Hermann Kafka when most of the evidence is so biased, and when the few impartial witnesses contradict each other.

According to Felix Weltsch, the portrait in Kafka's long letter to his father is broadly accurate; according to Hugo Bergmann, who went to the Kafkas' home often enough to call himself a member of the family, the portrait is unfair. Hermann Kafka was just "a Jewish businessman of his period, firmly planted with both feet in his business affairs." But what about the actual remarks Kafka quotes? There may be some inaccuracy in the reporting, but probably not much.

What is tantalising is that we don't know more about the context of mutual provocation: Kafka's writing makes us sympathise with him so much that we keep forgetting how awful it must have been for a man of HK's background and temperament to have a son like that. Once there were two points of view. Kafka tried hard to compensate for his subjective bias, but in letters, diaries and stories, as in biographies, there can be only one viewpoint; on the radio it's easier to represent two. I can have HK played alternately by two actors, one sounding less unkind than the other. I can invent characters as spokesmen for different opinions. An aggressive, antagonistic American lady, Zelda Swope, who calls herself "a Post-Structuralist", disbelieves in critical biographies and takes the view that HK was as warm and kindly and jovial as his granddaughters say he was. At the other extreme a Glaswegian Laingian, Dr Joe Gorbals, who says that HK must have been extremely stupid and even more unpleasant than his son made him out to be. Joe claims that if only Franz Kafka had been his patient, he'd have come to understand what a waste of time it was wanting a man like that fat slob to pass judgment on him. Writing the script I enjoy giving both Zelda and Joe the most convincing cases I can write for them, and I enjoy making myself rather ineffectual in trying, as a sort of chairman, to keep the peace when they insult each other—usually speakers are so guardedly polite on the radio it's nice to have two non-existent experts who have nothing to lose by being rude. But what effect is all this going to have when I revise the book and try to synthesise?

18 June

I KEEP COMING BACK to the question of fear. Having been terrified of his father, he was terrified of almost everything. Except death. He was right to see his insouciance about dying as one of his greatest sources of strength. After the haemorrhage there were, of course, moments of terror, of understanding how different the reality of death, of non-existence, must be from moments of enacting it imaginatively. But this discomfort was nothing in comparison with his chronic fear of life, which kept him so close to his family. He went on living in his parents' flat till he was 31, though he didn't even have any privacy. His bedroom was like a corridor. His parents had to walk through it to get from the living room to their bedroom; and if his mother saw Kafka's jacket hanging up with a letter sticking out of the pocket, she was quite liable to fish it out and read it. She did that with one of Felice's letters, and then wrote to Felice asking her to use her influence on Kafka to make him eat more and sleep more. I doubt whether anyone has been more sensitive to noise than Kafka was, and we'll never quantify the agony he suffered from voices, door-slams, taps running, household objects being dropped. There's the occasional pointer to this in the diaries, but except for one very oblique remark—that he felt like vomiting when he saw the matrimonial bed, the bed-linen no longer clean, the carefully laid-out nightshirts—there's no pointer to the sound that must have been nearly unbearable.

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HK wasn't the sort of man who'd feel obliged to respect his sensitive son's nervous system by inhibiting or even modifying noises. We know the walls were thin enough for Kafka to hear sounds as slight as a cough.

Possibly that's one of the reasons he got into the unsatisfactory routine of trying to sleep in the late afternoon after he'd come home from the office and had something to eat. Then he tried to rouse himself into writing and go on until the small hours of the morning. Defying his congenital weakness, though only too aware of it, he was trying, in effect, to crowd two short days into every one. His routine was more comfortable and more productive when he found a room of his own, but as soon as he'd had the haemorrhage, just over two years later, he gave up trying to live on his own. For about eight months he lived in the country with Ottla, and after that lived with his parents again for five years; and apart from eight months in a mountain sanatorium and three more months with Ottla after she'd married, he went on living in his father's flat till nine months before he died. When he broke free then, defying his parents, to live with Dora Dymant in Berlin, he regarded it as his greatest achievement. He'd always believed that his parents were "necessary elements of my being, which go on giving me strength, not holding me back but essentially belonging to me. . . ." To anyone who knew him, it must have looked more as though he belonged to them. Once, when Gustav Janouch had walked back with him to their flat, Kafka said: "Really I'm going up into a prison specially constructed for me, and all the more oppressive because it looks like an ordinary bourgeois home. . . ."

He lived and died without ever being able to feel that a house or a flat or even a room belonged to him. Throughout all the stints of freedom he had outside the prison, it was always a matter of living as Ottla's guest or renting a restricted space in somebody else's property. He never even had a rented flat that was properly self-contained. This must have a lot to do with the way that Josef K. in *Der Prozess* knows himself to be under arrest though free to move from one place to another. And K. in *Das Schloss* never feels entitled to be where he is. To stay in the village at all he has to be both devious and defiant. When he's given a job as caretaker in the school, he has to misuse space by sleeping in a classroom. When he tries to accost Klamm by waiting inside his sledge, he's like a frightened schoolboy, steeling himself to go out of bounds. He can never feel: "This space is mine, this is my territory." And neither could Kafka. That's why doors and windows are so important in his work. It is also one of the reasons writing was so important to him. The writer, like the painter, can feel pleasantly if delusorily proprietorial towards the area he reproduces. He's making it his own.

19 June

KAFKA ISSUES a kind of invitation to the biographer. When a Munich actress wanted to recite some of his work, he refused permission, saying he had no respect for the stories, only for the moments when he'd written them. Besides I can stand outside Kafka in a way he couldn't stand outside himself. I can notice that in *Metamorphosis*, nearly five years before he had his first haemorrhage, he said Gregor's lungs were unreliable, and at that time the doctors hadn't given Kafka any reason to think there was anything wrong with his lungs. But just before the haemorrhage he was writing *In the Penal Colony*, a story about a torture machine that inscribes on the victim's body the law he's ignorantly broken.

Kafka thought he was making a mess of his life because he had no means of finding out what the rules were, and the disease seemed like an inscription on his body, which he didn't necessarily find it easy to read. Another extraordinary coincidence: he was correcting the proofs of his story "The Hunger Artist" when he was himself starving to death because the tuberculosis in his larynx made it too painful for him to swallow enough food to keep himself alive. Life had never offered Kafka the kind of food he needed, and he'd never adapted himself to the food it offered.

20 June

IMPOSSIBLE not to think in terms of *whose fault*? If the son couldn't help being the man he was,

KAFKA: SELF-CARICATURE

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neither could the father, but who was more to blame for the way that throughout his life the son felt as though his father was either preventing him from coming fully alive or condemning him to death? This theme crops up explicitly for the first time in 1912: in the story *The Judgment* the son lovingly carries the sentence out as soon as his father pronounces it. *Metamorphosis* was written later the same year. There is only a fairly indirect association in the story between the origins of the transformation and Georg Benda's inadequacy as a son, as an employee, as a human being; but the idea may have developed in Kafka's mind as a fairly direct response to the crude animal imagery in his father's insults, and to the way that HK made him feel verminous. "With a few frank words you were pushing me down in the filth as if it were my destiny." The few frank words were an offer of prophylactic advice. Wouldn't a prostitute—if only there were no danger of disease—be preferable to Julie Wohryzek, Kafka's second fiancée? But obviously this was only one of countless opportunities that the nagging father took to make his son feel that the filth was his destiny. Isn't this the reason that *The Trial* ends with the words "It was as if the shame should survive him"? And is this why Kafka, not wanting the shame to survive him, left instructions that all his literary monuments to it should be demolished?

It was his father who gave him the feeling of being constantly on trial. Kafka and Ottla would retreat into the bathroom together.

> "Honestly we're not meeting to make a plot against you but to discuss, with total commitment, jokingly, seriously, with love, resistance, anger, revulsion, devotion, guilt-feelings, with all our emotional and intellectual resources, to discuss this terrible trial that's in progress between us, discuss it in all its aspects, this trial in which you always claim to be judge."

The sentence passed on Josef K. echoes the sentence passed in *The Judgment*, and the execution of the insect son when the aggressive father wounds him mortally by throwing apples at him. And near the end of Kafka's letter to his father, the son imagines how the father might answer the case against him. "The fact is", he says, "you've made your mind up that you want to do nothing but live on me." Franz Kafka, using his father as a mouthpiece, accuses himself of "sucking your lifeblood from another body. You're incapable of living, but to give yourself a clear and easy conscience, you set out to prove that I've taken all your capacity for living." It is only by putting words into his father's mouth that he can get as close as this to accusing him of being the parasite. But who was really sucking whose blood? A constantly nagging mother or wife is draining something from her victim. Draining energy, undermining self-respect, the feeling of adequacy, the ability to trust one's own judgment. What about a constantly nagging father? But Kafka never faces quite squarely up to the question: "If you've come to think of yourself as a parasite, if you feel yourself to be in need of sucking the lifeblood from another body, who created that need by sucking the lifeblood from yours? . . ."

25 June, Tel Aviv

RING Frau Hoffe from the hotel. No, she can't see me tomorrow: she has an appointment with her dentist, root treatment, very painful and exhausting. But she'll try to help me with the book on Czech Literature in German. I remind her that I'm writing a biography of Kafka. Hadn't I written to her about a book to be called *50 Years of Czech Literature in German*? No. Was she confusing me with someone else? "There have been an awful lot of books about Kafka." Mine is a biography, I tell her. Don't I know that Max Brod had already written a biography? I assure her that I've read it. Perhaps she might be able to see me the day after tomorrow in the morning. I'm told to ring her at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

At a party I meet Zippora Rubin, a painter of about 60 who knew Brod. He wasn't at all forthcoming about Kafka, she says. Rather possessive. Would say no more than, "Yes my child, you're quite right there."

27 June

IS THIS a doomed country? A Jewish professor once told Saul Bellow that it would be ironical if it turned out that the Jews had conveniently collected themselves in one country for a second holocaust.

Trying to resist the insane feeling that Kafka has brought me here. He complained that Brod misunderstood him and he once intended to write an autobiography; but I can imagine the irresistible mixture of charm and embarrassment in the way he'd dissuade anyone from writing about his life. Not that Frau Hoffe is in any way his representative. If she postpones the appointment, going into details about the treatment, the dentist, the anaesthetic, it may be that she resists every attempt to invade her manuscripts, not wanting anyone to know how much less she has than Brod left her. At one point she got into trouble for trying to export material from Israel, and there's no means of tracking down what manuscripts and drawings she's sold to private collectors. I know she has material I need to see: obviously I must seek out all the biographical facts I can. But why is this woman a link in a chain that goes back to Kafka? It was characteristic of him to need Brod (Brod was Hardy, says Walter Benjamin, to his Laurel). It was characteristic of Brod to settle in Tel Aviv, and

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she worked for him twenty-six years. If he accepted her love and left her all his papers, including Kafka's, her physical existence, even sixteen years after Brod's death, must say something about him and something (probably not much) about Kafka. So it's frustrating to have been here 48 hours without seeing her. I swim from a beach where everyone ignores the *No Swimming* notice and armoured cars patrol up and down, soldiers holding machine-guns at the ready.

It's a city full of advertisements and anomalies. *Kosher* Kentucky fried chicken, and policemen wearing skull-caps as they shine torches on a shop-front where a burglar-alarm is ringing. There's a lot of burglary, I'm told; I suppress the impulse to ask whether any of the burglars wear skull-caps. I spend four hours with her, from 3 o'clock. She's in a very nervous state because the flat was burgled while she was in Switzerland, and her daughter, wanting to protect her mother, who suffers from low blood-pressure, didn't tell her until the day before yesterday. Said she'd tidied the flat up while her mother was away.

Frau Hoffe says that Brod's diaries were lost in about 1939, after he'd given them to his brother. But she can show me the copy he'd made of passages about Kafka. He recorded a lot of Kafka's remarks, starting with one about a man who chattered incessantly: "Talk came out of his mouth like a stick." And Brod's first reaction to *Metamorphosis* (1 March 1913) was "Kafka finished reading his immortal insect story, which is perhaps the best of our epoch." Even if he misunderstood Kafka, he appreciated his importance. The note for 28 March 1922 is: "Kafka read out loud. The only real thing in my life is his work."

The biggest surprise was the entry for 17 August 1923:

> "Yesterday with Kafka.—His terror—ghosts, nothing comprehensible. Terrible that he can't be taken somewhere by the sea. He reads me the curses from *Leviticus*, wants *Tefillin*."

Tefillin are the phylacteries that orthodox Jews wear for morning prayers every day except Saturday. None of the books give the impression that Kafka's rapprochement with the creed had gone that far.

28 June

WHEN THE DIARY records a visit to a brothel, Frau Hoffe tells me: "You don't need to mention that."

How good a friend Brod was to Kafka is evident from his 1912 account of their holiday in Weimar. At the Goethehaus Kafka "flirts successfully" with the caretaker's pretty daughter, and on 3 July, "I distract the father with photographs while Kafka persuades the daughter into a rendezvous. I lead the father behind a high fence. . . ."

29 June

LIBRARY IN JERUSALEM. The librarian in charge of the manuscript collection assures me there are no unpublished letters by Kafka. In fact there are two to Elsa Bergmann, but not particularly interesting. In the Hugo Bergmann archive, though, there's a memoir of Kafka he wrote for a Tel Aviv newspaper in 1966. He remembers a challenge Kafka issued to him outside a bookshop when they were both schoolboys.

> " 'Now try me out. I'll close my eyes, you'll read me the titles of the books in the window, and I'll guess the authors.' I do so, and Franz passes his test brilliantly."

They were at school together for twelve years, but in the last year their friendship cooled: Bergmann was an ardent Zionist while Kafka was then a Socialist. When the Prague Zionists held their first public meeting in 1899, Jewish Socialists broke it up. Bergmann later emigrated to Palestine; but when he visited Prague in the spring of 1923, Kafka promised to buy shares in the Bank Hapo'alim if Bergmann would arrange for the bank to send him the necessary information.

30 June

FINAL SESSION with Frau Hoffe. When Kafka was ill with tuberculosis Brod tried to warn him against the self-destructive instincts that made him side with the disease against his enfeebled will to survive. It was also obvious to Brod that Kafka's father could have afforded to pay for him to be treated in a better sanatorium in a better climate. From December 1920 to August 1921 Kafka stayed at Matliary, in the High Tatra Mountains, despite advice given to Brod by Dr Heinrich Kral:

> "Only proper treatment with tuberculin can help you. He knows cases from his own practice where injections have led to complete recovery. Why should you think that what helps other people is of no help to you?"

This was written on 9 March. Twelve days later:

> "My faith in Matliary is shattered. That you lie naked in the sun, presumably on your own suggestion, doesn't please me at all. . . . The doctors, the staff etc. don't seem serious enough."

My last night in Tel Aviv. Two bugs in my room. Not wanting to do the killing myself, I telephone the hall porter. An old man appears, stamps on one, pulls the bed out, locates the other, stamps on it, crumples the remains into a newspaper, sprays the two patches on the carpet out of an aerosol, wishes me good night, disappears.

It occurs to me, too late, that one of the insects might have been Kafka. . . .

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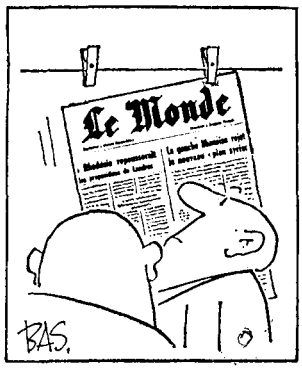
NOTES & TOPICS

European Diary

French Ideology



AT LEAST in this the French remain unique: no other people can take a book so seriously. Here, at the moment, is an ideological pamphlet that deals with a few ideas out of the 19th century, reconsiders life and letters under the Vichy régime, and debunks a few schoolboy notions—and it has been for months now at the centre of a national controversy. Indeed on the front page of *Le Monde* both the chief editor and the foreign editor have felt compelled to clarify their own views on the whole provocative subject.

To be sure, pamphlets have always played such a role in French politics, at least ever since the great explosion caused by Abbe Sieyès' screed, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers État?*. They need not be narrowly political, for literature, philosophy, and even anthropology have been known to fuse furious argumentation on a national scale. One thinks in recent years of the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, and of the disputes over the nature of Soviet Russia in little Left-Bank magazines. And only the other season the young men of the so-called "*Nouveaux Philosophes*" movement became best-selling authors because their books became what are known as "media-events." It seems so strange and surprising for a new generation to come along and attack the grand old tradition of *gauchisme* that everybody felt obliged to sit up and take notice.

After all, "Anti-Communism" is still taken to be a kind of "visceral" phenomenon, having essentially to do with the "gut reaction" of a bourgeoisie worried about its private property. Could there actually be anti-Communists who attack Marxist-Leninist repression because they believe in freedom and an open society? What a shock to have to acknowledge figures out of the militant '68 generation as tribunes against totalitarianism of the Left! And they didn't even have guilt-complexes about getting "applause from the false side". . . .

An intellectual scandal, but more than that—for where a Presidential election is decided by so few votes (last time by not more than a few hundred thousand), then such currents and counter-currents on the cultural scene have to be taken in earnest. The counter-offensive on the part of the "New Philosophers" against the *Nouvelle Droite* was no less notable. Leading these outriders of the wild West is Bernard-Henri Lévy, busy not only with his own books but as an editor and publisher of a whole series of other titles from other authors.[1]

HIS THIRD BOOK, *L'idéologie française* (Grasset) has caused a greater stir than the others. He smites friend and foe on both Left and Right, and perhaps most of all the "Myth" of France, the mythology of its democratic universalism, its "*rayonnement*", its pretence of a radiating enlightenment. The debunking argument is based in part around Gobineau, whose notorious "Essay on the Inequality of Human Races" established a disastrous form of European racism; and in part around the true correlation of forces in the affair of the Dreyfus case, with Church and Army and even a section of the French Left stooping to anti-Semitic abuse as the good Captain gets condemned as a spy and sent off to Devil's Island. And, in part, it is about Marshal Pétain who was responsible for a Vichy law about the Jews which pre-empted Nazi occupation policy and even went beyond what Hitler had in mind at the time. As for the so-called Left opposition, it has to be recalled that the French C.P. was for a while pro-Vichy and helped to denounce its Popular Front allies when Léon Blum and Edouard Daladier came up for Pétainist assault.

All traditions go; little remains, and there are no excuses allowed. Lévy has little patience with the rationalisations that would blame the influence of party bosses in Moscow or the power of the Nazis in Berlin. France herself is the source of the fascist, anti-democratic potential in the nation.

As a piece of intellectual and cultural history the book has obvious weaknesses. There was another tradition which criticised Gobineau, defended Dreyfus, resisted Pétain; but it is not one which interests the author at the moment when bombs destroy synagogues, police round up foreign workers, and official censorship stealthily increases. Can one distortion ever serve to rectify another

[1] See my previous comments on Lévy's ideas in ENCOUNTER: "The Very Latest from Paris" (March 1980), "God's Own Testament" (September 1979) and "A Year of the 'New Philosophers'" (November 1978).

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distortion? In any event, once again a book is in the news,[2] provoking the citizenry, and keeping the French penchant for polemics at the boil.

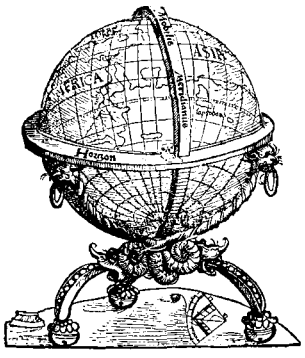
[2] ED NOTE: We hope to publish shortly two differing comments on the book by Raymond Aron and Jean-François Revel.

François Bondy

International Commentary

Israel, the Palestinians, & the West

On Dangerous Options—By ALUN CHALFONT



IT WAS George Will, that most urbane of American columnists, who distilled the essence of the Arab-Israel dilemma when he wrote (in 1977): "Arab political concessions could be repudiated overnight; Israel's physical concessions could not be reclaimed without war." It is a message which should be engraved prominently on the cover of every briefing-folder prepared by the industrious Foreign Offices of the Western world for their political masters. It came vividly into my mind on a recent visit to an Arab country, in the course of a conversation with a senior member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, a man of urbane and agreeable presence. Confronted with Articles 15, 19 and 22 of the *Palestinian National Covenant* (the central document of the PLO) and the inevitable argument that Israel was unlikely to agree to negotiate with an organisation which was openly committed to its destruction, his reply was disarmingly accommodating. It was, he insisted, a negotiable position, but not one to be abandoned *in advance* of negotiations. If Israel would agree to withdraw from the occupied territories, the rhetoric of the PLO might undergo a radical transformation. Well, yes, but then, as George Will says. . . .

It is not too much to say that the Arab-Israel confrontation is entering a critical and possibly decisive phase. Indeed it cannot be too much to say, since someone has said it at least once a year for a quarter-of-a-century. There is, however, something especially significant and disturbing about the present conjunction of events. There is turbulence and conflict, either actual or imminent, from Pakistan to Morocco, from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic, throughout the entire world of Islam—a potential scene of conflagration and confrontation which might prove to be the flash point of a major international upheaval.

THE DISASTROUS REVOLUTION in Iran, followed by the war with Iraq, has created a new focus of strategic uncertainty in South-west Asia. With Soviet forces now on the Iran-Afghanistan border, five hours from the Persian Gulf and with no effective opposition in their way, Saudi Arabia, Oman and the Gulf States are beginning to feel unpleasantly exposed.

Now that the long-running saga of the American hostages has ended, the power struggle within Iran is bound to be intensified. The credibility of the mullahs has been undermined by the rapid decline of Iranian industry, growing unemployment and the shortages created by the war with Iraq, which includes a sharp reduction in the amount of oil available for domestic heating during the winter. It seems to be only a matter of time before one or more of the factions competing for power in Iran decide to make their move. One of the most likely results of any attempt at a counter-revolution is a civil war, in which the super-powers would almost certainly become involved. It is not difficult to postulate a number of contingencies in which a "call for help" to the Soviet Union—from, for example, the *Tudeh* or a rebellious Azerbaijan—would be answered, with incalculably dangerous consequences.

Meanwhile Syria, which has concluded a security agreement with the Soviet Union, faces the real possibility of a fundamentalist Islamic revolution of its own, led by the Syrian Moslem Brotherhood. In the North African countries of Islam the unpredictable Colonel Gaddafi is engaged in an attempt to annex Chad, one of the key strategic areas of central Africa; and King Hussan of Morocco is locked in a struggle with the

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Polisario insurgents. In both these conflicts the influence of the Soviet Union is never far from the heart of the matter.

FACED WITH this catalogue of wars and rumours of wars, it may seem difficult to sustain the proposition that the Israel-Palestinian issue is the key to the peace and stability of the Middle East. Yet this is still the almost unanimous view of the Arab world. The extreme formulation of this attitude is that Israeli intransigence has forced the Palestine Liberation Organisation into a programme of international violence which has had a fundamental and far-reaching destabilising effect. "There would", said one normally moderate and perceptive Arab leader recently, "have been no Iranian revolution, no Iran-Iraq war and no Russian invasion of Afghanistan had it not been for the Palestinian problem. . . ." As he went on to say that there would have been no revolution in El Salvador either, it might be possible to doubt his devotion to strict objectivity. It was, however, clear from the proceedings of the Islamic Conference in January at Taif, in Saudi Arabia, that there is almost unanimous belief among the Arab leaders that the Palestine issue is at the heart of their concerns, and that the "liberation" of Jerusalem and its "return to Arab sovereignty" is one of their principal and most immediate foreign-policy aims.

IT IS, THEREFORE, not unduly alarmist to suggest that another outbreak of war between Israel and some of its Arab neighbours might before long exacerbate the already precarious state of affairs in the area. This time, however, the implications would be considerably more disturbing than they were in 1967 or 1973.

The possibility of the use, or the threatened use, of nuclear weapons becomes greater with every resort to military operations in the Arab-Israel confrontation. In Pakistan the development of a nuclear weapon is technically well advanced, and it is reasonably clear that some of the money needed to finance the programme, which has in the past come from Libya, now comes from Saudi Arabia. Colonel Gaddafi is believed to have demanded access to fissionable material in exchange for his own assistance, and the Saudis, worried by the growing power of Iraq, are unlikely to help in the development of Pakistan's "Islamic bomb" without demanding in return a place in the dubious shelter of its umbrella when it finally appears. Meanwhile, Gaddafi, confirming his unique reputation for eccentricity, has approached the Chinese in an attempt to secure the means of creating his own private mushroom-shaped cloud.

The Saudi fears of Iraq are not entirely without foundation. The Iraqis have a French "Osiris"-type reactor, and they have been supplied with a consignment of weapons-grade plutonium on the somewhat disingenuous grounds that they are debarred by the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty from using it for military purposes. Although it is true that Iraq has signed and ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and also, in 1972, the "Safeguards Agreement" with the International Atomic Energy Agency, it is also true that there is nothing to prevent any country repudiating either agreement if it believes that its national security is at risk. The Iraqis have an advanced nuclear centre at Al-Tawit, north of Bagdad; it was damaged in an air-raid early in the war with Iran, but the weapons research programme was not seriously affected. Most serious analysts believe that Iraq is capable of testing a nuclear weapon in the course of the next five years.

WHAT IS MORE significant is the status of Israel, often referred to as "one of the most advanced of the near-nuclear powers." There is, in fact, little doubt that Israel is, for all practical purposes, already a nuclear power. There was never any real possibility that the Israelis would accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty; and since 1956 it has been the policy of the United States, while discharging its own obligations under the treaty and subscribing to the diplomatic rhetoric of the non-proliferation strategy, to refrain from bringing pressure to bear on successive Israeli governments to prevent them acquiring or developing nuclear weapons. The result is that Israel is now believed to have a substantial stockpile of nuclear weapons together with delivery-systems capable of striking at any potential enemy in the region.

The implications of this are underlined by the current economic crisis in Israel. With inflation running at well over 100% the defence establishment, for many years a sacred cow, is now a much less assiduously protected species. Since the Six-Day War of 1967, the Israeli defence establishment and its industrial infrastructure have grown prodigiously. Israel now (according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London) has a standing army of 164,000 with over 200,000 reserves on a permanent 48-hour standby. Since the "Yom Kippur" War of 1975, military growth has accelerated until almost 30% of the gross national product is devoted, directly or indirectly, to national defence. During the last 15 years the defence budget has accounted for almost the entire growth in the national product. Already, even under the hawkish administration of Mr Begin, this state of affairs has come under increasingly heavy attack from those who, like the former Israeli Finance Minister, Yigal Hurwitz, believe that a rearrangement of priorities is urgently needed. "The

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State", said Mr Hurwitz at a meeting shortly before his resignation in January, "has an Army, and not the other way round. . . ." If, as seems likely, there are to be substantial reductions in the strength of the armed forces and in the planned level of expenditure on tanks, aircraft and artillery, the Israelis, unless they are to repeat the fundamental mistakes of some of their Western friends, will have to devise new strategic concepts and doctrines. It is not difficult to predict that some of the position-papers emerging from the inevitable "defence review" will examine the option of nuclear deterrence; and, if Israel were confined within its pre-1967 frontiers, this would almost certainly involve a first-strike strategy.

THE ECONOMIC and strategic crisis in Israel is, of course, complicated by the political crisis which has arisen from it. Begin's present administration will come to an end in June, and the most probable outcome of the election is a victory for Shimon Peres and his Labour Party. Whatever this may mean for Israel's fragile economy, it will almost certainly bring a new direction to the conduct of foreign policy and especially to the handling of the Palestinian problem. Peres does not subscribe to the ideological conviction that Israel owns the title deeds to the West Bank; and Abba Eban, one of his principal foreign-policy experts, has frequently expressed his doubts about the dubious wisdom of continuing to govern over a million Palestinians against their will. Peres' preferred solution is the "Jordanian option" (in which a substantial area of the West Bank would be reabsorbed by Jordan). He points with impeccable common sense to the advantages of collaboration between Israel and Jordan in roads, railways, ports, and other aspects of economic infrastructure; and to the obvious benefits to the Middle East and to the rest of the world of an area of cooperation and stability stretching from the Dead Sea to the Red Sea.

Within that general context Shimon Peres seems to accept some of the criteria of the "Brookings formula" for Jerusalem. In 1975, the Brookings Institute produced a comprehensive study which included the following passage on Jerusalem:

> "The issue of Jerusalem is especially hard to resolve because it involves intense emotions on the part of both Israelis and Arabs. It embraces sites that are among the most holy for Muslims, Jews, and Christians. It has been the focus of Jewish messianic yearning and has had special significance in Muslim history. The city was bitterly contested in the wars of 1948 and 1967 and its division in the inter-war years left a heritage of deep mutual recrimination.

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Finally, it is the capital of Israel and might also be sought as the capital of a Palestine state. For all these reasons the issue is highly symbolic for both sides. Consequently, it may prove wise to leave its resolution to a late stage of the negotiation. Whatever that resolution may be, it should meet as a minimum the following criteria:

(*a*) There should be unimpeded access to all the holy places and each should be under the custodianship of its own faith.

(*b*) There should be no barriers dividing the city which would prevent free circulation throughout it.

(*c*) Each national group within the city should, if it so desires, have substantial political autonomy within the area where it predominates. All these criteria should be met within a city (*1*) under Israeli sovereign jurisdiction with free access to the holy places, (*2*) under divided sovereign jurisdiction between Israel and an Arab state with assured free circulation, or (*3*) under either of these arrangements with an international authority in an agreed area, such as the old walled city, with free access to it from both Israel and the Arab state. These or any other possible solutions should incorporate all three of the criteria set forth above.

No solution will be able to satisfy fully the demands of either side. Yet the issue must be resolved if there is to be a stable peace. We are convinced that ingenuity and patience should be able to find a compromise which will be fair and ultimately acceptable, even though not ideal from the point of view of any party."

Peres certainly favours free access to the Holy Places ("they can fly their flags over them if they want to") and a system of autonomous boroughs within the city.

THE DIFFICULTIES in the way of these apparently reasonable proposals are, however, formidable. In the first place it is hardly necessary to observe that a production of *Hamlet* loses much of its point without the Prince of Denmark; and King Hussein is scarcely likely to accept with becoming docility the role for which he is being cast. Indeed, he has said as much at the Taif summit, and there is some reason to believe that he meant what he said. He has gained impressively in political stature over recent years; he has a powerful and loyal Army behind him; and he is (to put the matter in its most uncontroversial terms) unlikely to put his power and prestige at risk in order to provide a formula which will allow Israel to avoid the central issue of Palestinian aspirations for a political and geographical identity of their own.

IT HAS OFTEN been said that if there is one powerful argument against a proposed course of action it is superfluous to deploy any more. Yet there are at least two other groups to whom the "Jordanian option" would be unacceptable—the Palestinians themselves and, perhaps more significantly, a large number of Israelis. These will include not only the uncompromising *Eretz Yisrael* faction of the Likud party in opposition and the ideologically intransigent *Gush Emunim*, but also the inhabitants of the West Bank settlements, who would presumably have to be persuaded to leave, or be forcibly removed, under the "Jordanian option." In this context it is by no means certain that the Army could be entirely relied upon to implement the Peres policy. It is not surprising that President Sadat, that enduring symbol of courage and realism in the Middle East, has expressed grave doubts about the relevance of the Jordanian solution, preferring the "autonomous state" envisaged in the Camp David agreement. Furthermore, there is so far no evidence to suggest that the Peres formula for Jerusalem is likely to be more successful than any other proposal or "option." Indeed, the likelihood is that Jerusalem will continue to be the stumbling-block against which all attempts at a peace settlement will ultimately come to grief.

The situation, then, remains as intractable and as explosive as it has ever been—and with the introduction of the nuclear factor into the equation, incalculably more dangerous. It would be comforting to record that, faced not only with the destabilisation of an area of vital strategic importance, but also with the appalling dangers of a regional nuclear confrontation, the West had a coordinated approach for the preservation of peace and the security of their own strategic interests. That is, however, not the case.

The Carter Administration, influenced by some of its European allies and discouraged by the apparent intransigence of Prime Minister Begin, had, before its inglorious departure, begun to dismantle the familiar framework of America's Middle East policy; and there is so far no consensus among President Reagan's advisers about what is to be erected in its place. Mr Reagan himself has expressed strongly pro-Israeli sentiments; but there are those in his administration for whom a settlement of the Palestinian problem is a more important matter; and yet others whose plans for establishing military bases in some of the Arab countries of the Middle East to contain Russian expansionism would not get much further if the American government adopted the uncompromisingly pro-Israeli stance suggested by some of the campaign rhetoric. Certainly in his confirmation hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in January, General Haig, the Secretary of State, was clearly determined to keep the options open, while wholly accepting that "the right of the

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State of Israel to exist" remained central to the United States' foreign policy (he could scarcely have done less). He underlined American dependence on supplies of Middle East oil, and spoke circumspectly of "those Arab states whose goodwill and hopefully convergency of policy we would seek. . . ."

In the complicated process of making up his mind about American policy, President Reagan enjoys the benefit (if that is the appropriate word to use) of the so-called "European initiative", formally enunciated in the Venice Declaration of June 1980. The declaration is a document of almost unexceptionable probity and rectitude. It recognises that "the growing tensions affecting the region constitute a serious danger", and it proceeds from a point of departure which it regards, perhaps with excessive complacency, as being universally accepted by the international community, namely:

> "*The right to existence of all the states in the region, including Israel, and justice for all the peoples, which implies the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.*"

It goes on to declare that "the achievement of these objectives requires the involvement and support of all the parties concerned in the peace settlement" and, even more significantly, to refer to the PLO "which will have to be associated with the negotiations."

Here it seems safe to predict that the "European initiative" will run into at least as much difficulty from the Israelis as the Jordanian option might meet from the Palestinians and their allies. Abba Eban, the most likely Foreign Minister in a Peres government, has already dismissed the European initiative with magisterial contempt, referring to Western Europe's "manifest lack of concern for Israel's sensitivities" and its "supercilious and envious attitude to the American role." Shlomo Argov, the Ambassador of Israel in London, has, with characteristic candour, described the initiative as "a question of European interests versus Israeli interests" and has commented bitterly on Western Europe's "inability to do more than abstain on a UN resolution equating Zionism with racism."

There is indeed, something about the Venice Declaration which suggests that its principal architect, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, has been seduced by his diplomatic triumph over Zimbabwe into believing that the irreconcilable can be reconciled by the magic formula of bringing "all the parties concerned around a negotiating table. . . ." Lord Carrington insists that there is no conflict between the European initiative and the American approach to the Middle East—a view which is not entirely shared in Washington. He claims that "all parties concerned in the Middle East—whether they approve of the European ideas or not—clearly take them seriously." Yet the

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national position-papers which seek to translate the sentiments of the Venice Declaration into the hard realities of a durable settlement provide no reason for unbridled optimism.

AT THE DECEMBER MEETING in Luxembourg of the heads of government of the EEC, a document was evidently tabled and adopted which set out a series of options to form the bases for exploratory discussions with "all the parties concerned" in the Palestinian problem. The essential prerequisite (deriving from the United Nations Resolution 242) is to be total withdrawal by Israel from the territories occupied in June 1967. This is to be completed in a period of two years, beginning with an immediate substantial withdrawal, leaving only temporary "security points." A transition authority is to be established during this period, possibly under the supervision of the United Nations. On the pattern of the Israel-Egypt treaty there is to be parallel progress between withdrawal and the normalisation of relations between Israel and the other parties.

The West Bank settlements are to be dismantled (with the possible exception of those which existed before the 1948 War). Three options are envisaged for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—an independent Palestinian State or one of the two Jordanian options, namely a Jordan-Palestinian Federation or one including Israel as well. The choice is to be made by a referendum of the Palestinian people weighted in favour of those living in the occupied territories. There are plans for "demilitarised zones", "security zones", and United Nations guarantees, as well as suggestions for arms control, disarmament, and the renunciation of force. So far as Jerusalem is concerned the "European initiative" seems to rely heavily on the Brookings criteria. The proposals vary from a return to the "international status" proposed by the partition plan of 1947 to the placing of the Holy Places under the control of religious authorities and the "internationalisation" of the Old City.

IT REQUIRES no effort of the imagination to conclude that these "options" are likely to have little appeal to an Israeli government of any political persuasion. To the great majority of Israelis, the idea of a United Nations "guarantee" is almost comically irrelevant. The crucial question is whether the approach is likely to be accepted by the United States and pressed by them upon the Israelis, or whether President Reagan will attempt some new variation or development of the Camp David approach when a new government is in control in Israel in the summer. Behind this lies the central issue of how the strategic interests of the West in the area are perceived. The experience of European countries in the Middle East in 1973 has left a permanent scar on their collective psyche. Common Market countries were then importing a large proportion (in the case of France, Germany, and Italy over 70%) of their crude oil from the Arab world. Their Middle East policy has ever since been dominated by fears of an oil embargo.

The principal danger of this approach is that it accepts too readily the Arab perception that the Palestinian problem is at the root of all the troubles of the Middle East and the dangers which they pose for the West. The instabilities in Iran and Syria—the fears aroused in Saudi Arabia by the attack on the Great Mosque—the ambitions of Iraq and the sense of exposure and vulnerability among the smaller Gulf sheikdoms—all add up to a perilously unstable state of affairs which will not be directly affected by a solution of the Palestinian problem.

The principal threat to the permanent supply of Middle East oil is posed by the Soviet Union. Of course, it is in the interests of the West that the oil-producing countries should be ruled by people whose instinctive sympathies are with the West rather than with the Russians; and, of course, as long as the Palestinian problem remains unsolved the Arab countries will be more susceptible to the blandishments of Soviet diplomacy and more vulnerable to Soviet exploitation by subversion and destabilisation.

YET ANY ATTEMPT to solve the Palestinian problem at the expense of Israel's sense of security—on the basis that once Palestinian aspirations have been realised "everything else will fall into place"—is doomed from the outset to failure, possibly of apocalyptic proportions.

For it is possible to argue that the Palestine issue has been exploited to divert attention from the two crucial facts of Middle Eastern life. One is that many Arab countries regard as intolerable the presence in their midst of a sovereign non-Arab, non-Muslim state. For those who take this view, the achievement of a Palestinian homeland is of little significance unless it is accompanied by the destruction of Israel. The second important fact is that the Soviet Union is determined to dominate the Middle East. The events in Afghanistan and South Yemen, the agreement with Syria, and the destabilising of Iran were not random happenings—they were part of a systematic plan to destroy Western influence in the region; and, to the Russians, Israel is the focal point of the Western strategic presence in the Middle East.

Any belief that Western interests can be secured by appeasing extreme Arab attitudes ignores the decisive factor that it is the Russians, and the Russians alone, who can effectively disrupt oil supplies—the oil-producing countries have to sell their oil, however high the price; and the fallacy

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that Islam is the only effective barrier to the spread of Communism in the Middle East has surely by now been cruelly exposed. It is difficult to resist the conclusion advanced by many moderate Israelis, namely that the Palestine problem is largely irrelevant to Gulf security, and that Western policy in the Middle East should be based upon the clear recognition that a secure and well-armed Israel is the lynch-pin of any intelligently conceived Western defence system in the area. The Israeli attitude towards Western Europe contains a perceptible element of contempt for a collection of countries which have apparently decided to abdicate from the responsibilities of power and who have chosen instead to base their foreign policies on the historically precarious foundation of appeasement. This opinion was articulated most uncompromisingly by Shlomo Argov in the course of a speech to the Institute of Jewish Affairs last summer. He accused Western Europe of undermining the Camp David approach. "The true logic and purpose of present European diplomacy is none other than . . . Israel for Oil." Although this somewhat abrasive judgment is angrily dismissed by Western European leaders, it is difficult to deny that there is some justification for Israel's current disenchantment not only with Western Europe, but with the recent record of the West as a whole.

ONE OF THE principal criticisms of President Carter and his Administration is that they gave little evidence of understanding the legitimate uses of power. A willingness to defend one's national interests, or those of one's allies, is not nowadays either the most popular or the most fashionable method of conducting international relations. It has, however, the quite considerable merit of inspiring confidence in friends and respect in potential enemies. When it became known in 1973[1] that the United States had rehearsed a contingency plan to send ground, sea, and air forces to Saudi Arabia to prevent sabotage and to forestall any possible takeover of the oilfields, there was, predictably, bitter public criticism from many Arab leaders at this regrettable demonstration of "sabre rattling . . . neo-imperialism . . . gunboat diplomacy." Privately however, a number of Middle Eastern leaders admitted that the American response was realistic and consistent with the role of the United States as the principal defender of Western interests.

Since then there has been a steady erosion of American credibility in foreign policy. This apparent lack of resolution has been attributed by some observers to the "psychological wounds" of Viet Nam, by others to the temperamental idiosyncracies of the Carter Administration. Angola, Iran, and Afghanistan all reinforced a growing belief that the United States had abdicated not only from its role as the natural leader of the free world, but from any role requiring a realistic conception of the uses of power. There are clear signs that the Reagan Administration intends to reverse this trend. Certainly, even before the President had taken the oath of office, his transition team was active in the Middle East, examining the various technical and tactical options for the distant application of American military power.

IT IS STILL TOO EARLY to discern precisely how President Reagan's Middle East policy will take shape. It will, quite obviously, be much affected by the results of the Israeli election and by the attitudes of the new Israeli government. If a Peres government clearly identifies its aims as being peace between Israel and the Palestinians within the context of a Palestinian homeland, the question of how it is to be achieved remains, but at once becomes less intractable. The realistic and constructive elements within the Palestine Liberation Organisation are probably ready to accept the concept of a homeland in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. At some stage (and it will have to be a fairly early stage) they will have to translate this into the commitment to full peace with Israel. There will have to be a final abandonment of the suggestion that Israel's withdrawal to the 1967 boundaries would be no more than a first step. Israel itself is not "occupied territory", and it is simply unrealistic to suppose that Israel, under a government of any complexion, will be confident to negotiate a permanent settlement until the PLO have repudiated the aim of the destruction of the State of Israel embodied in the Palestinian Covenant.

[1] Cf. a report published by the Institute for the Study of Conflict, *The Security of Middle East Oil* (London, 1979).

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IN SPITE OF the appalling difficulties which arise from the apparently irreconcilable positions of the two sides, and the general instability in the area, there is now a real possibility that President Reagan may be able to complete with Shimon Peres what President Carter began at Camp David.

The attitude of America's West European allies will be a critically important factor, and they will have to consider with great care how far and how fast they are prepared to press the approach implicit in the Venice Declaration. In the course of Mrs Thatcher's recent visit to Washington, Lord Carrington tried, without notable success, to impress Mr Alexander Haig with its virtues. The consensus in Washington, most unequivocally articulated by Senator John Tower (the Chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee), is that Western Europe would be better employed in supporting America's lucid and constructive concept of the Middle East than in advancing dubious initiations of its own. It is, as the Venice Declaration insists, important that a just solution should finally be found to the Palestinian problem. Justice, however, is indivisible. It is right that West European leaders should play their part in the search for a lasting settlement. They should, however, be in no doubt that of all the dangers which lie ahead none is greater than that which will follow any attempt to serve perceived Western interests by attempting to contrive a settlement which does not, in the eyes of the Israelis, enshrine permanently their security and their survival as a nation. To do so will, in the long term, irreparably damage the *real* interests of the West. This is the measure of the danger inherent in any ill-considered attempt by the Western Europeans to become involved in a situation which it is very largely beyond their capacity to influence.

Wine-Making

Patience, and the room, cool
for the dry wine to clear:
hold the flask up, the lamp
peers through like the red moon
I saw that evening—well,
just one evening I saw
the moon, red, for that's

the simple truth: which is clear
also, like wine, and also
among the things that improve
with time. More, old friend,
than we can say of ourselves:
if we could simply maintain,
like a moon, say, what we do,

over a very long time
almost exactly the same
or at least, not any worse,
that indeed would call
for what even so I shall do
looking towards yourself and
raising my glass, when the wine

matures. I shall raise my glass,
speak the truth of you, drink a health:
which, may you long enjoy
to enjoy such wine as this
may clear to in time. I raise
to it now, an empty glass
that you, in time, may fill.

John Holloway

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Edward Shils' Achievement

The Owl of Minerva—By JULIUS GOULD

IT WAS, I THINK, in 1948 in Oxford that I first heard of Edward Shils. I had read, though I could not judge, a paper on the state of American sociology that he had published in the reformist journal *Pilot Papers* (1947). He was then a colleague at the London School of Economics of my old friend Donald MacRae, who has subsequently written of how Shils in those days

> "inspired our new students of sociology, ever more numerous, with a belief in their endeavours and the desirability of sustained empirical enquiry. He perhaps failed to communicate to all of them his sense of the dangerous in social life. But to all his students sociology became not only a discipline, but a commitment, and from him many learned a quirky tolerance and a resigned moralism"[1]

Donald MacRae had mentioned Shils in connection with some slightly Byzantine departmental issue at the School. But the matters that were at issue, even at the time, were far from clear: they were a blend of personal, intellectual, and political disagreements of the kind not unknown in the best-ordered Departments of Sociology. I first saw Shils around that time—as I was leaving one of G. D. H. Cole's seminars on political thought at All Souls College, Shils and MacRae came in. I recollect a sturdy, resolute presence, a slightly rosy countenance that gave a clear intimation that its owner did not suffer fools gladly if at all. By the time I arrived to teach at LSE in 1950 Shils had returned to the United States. From his pupils (some of whom were more gifted than others . . .) I could form no quick picture of his influence: and, of course, I could not see for myself what manner of man it was who had, in so short a sojourn, left behind so many conflicting memorials.

Since those days Edward Shils has been a beneficiary and an active ornament of one of the world's most remarkable intellectual groupings—that of the University of Chicago. Much in Shils' reflections on the development of sociology—as contained, for example, in *The Calling of Sociology*, the third volume of his Selected Papers[2]—shows the debt he recognises to the University where he has worked as student and teacher for some fifty years. Both as Professor and as an elder statesman he has given energetic service—not least in the heady days of student turbulence in the late 1960s. There are grounds for the view that Chicago suffered far less intellectual disruption and corrosion of academic responsiblity in those difficult days than many another prestigious American university—and that its escape owed much to the humane steadiness of purpose of men like Shils, men who were no less inclined than he was to abdicate before fools. They had the added strength not to quail guiltily at the first honourable or restless stirrings of the student body or the first growls of a confused, often volatile, group within the faculty.[3]

Over and above his work at Chicago, Shils pursues a seemingly endless academic year by teaching also at Cambridge—where, after a fruitful period at King's College in Noël Annan's time, he is now a Fellow of Peterhouse. This arrangement has persisted over two decades; and, over the years, I have known Shils in both environments. The private Shils does not seem to vary very much in either of his homes or houses. Surrounded by a mountain of books and periodicals, he is convivial and penetrating in either setting—showing a shrewd, often acerbic curiosity about human frailties and a restless, relentless pursuit of learning. Yet there is a sense in which he is, as one would expect, more at home in Chicago—a cultural community that is part of his fibre and of whose ethnic and other diversities he has been a lifelong student. It was there, after all, that he walked with Robert

[1] "The Basis of Social Cohesion" in *Man and the Social Sciences*, edited by W. A. Robson (1972), p.53.

[2] *The Intellectuals and the Powers, and Other Essays*, $17.50, £12.25. *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology*, $25.00, £17.50, *The Calling of Sociology: Essays on the Pursuit of Learning*, $25.00, £17.50. By EDWARD SHILS. University of Chicago Press.

[3] Shils' analysis of the mood of those days, "Plenitude and Scarcity: the Anatomy of an International Cultural Crisis", first appeared in ENCOUNTER, May 1969. In eloquence and insight it still towers way above the plethora of commentary on "student unrest."

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Park, one of the main forces behind the inter-war Chicago School of Sociology.[4] It was there that he burrowed into and out of European social thought—and there that in 1941 he found theoretical insights as well as repulsive data from his study of what he somewhere calls "xenophobic nativists and Nazi sympathisers."

EDWARD SHILS needs no spokesman or interpreter. He has written, over five decades, and spoken so much for himself—and on topics of such importance—as to defy encapsulation in summary form. Nor, I surmise, would so proud, independent, and often mordant a thinker entirely welcome an essay in the art of the impossible. None the less—as is clear from the three volumes of his Selected Papers that have so far been published—he has never lacked a sense of intellectual mission, and has never shrunk from distilling, out of a long experience, a cultural mode that has meaning (and political significance) for others than himself. That mode combines an abiding concern for social thought with a deep understanding of the fragility of social frameworks: in exploring that mode he has an especial interest in the responsibilities and temptations of the intellectual classes in modern societies. He is firmly, though, on occasion, pessimistically, engaged in grasping the precarious grounds of political liberty.

An assessment of such an approach can be attempted: but I am very conscious that in such a writer there are depths that, despite the fluency and cogency with which he writes, remain difficult of access. There is in his essays not just a ruminative, often remorseless pursuit of truth about serious things. There is also a sense of still unfinished business—a sense of dissatisfaction with his very considerable achievement in, for example, clarifying some key ideas in social analysis. He has none of the narrow self-satisfaction of the "professional" specialist in the social sciences who seeks to commune only with his kind: he is not (nor, I suspect, was he ever) over-confident that the social sciences can be easily or mechanically "applied." In the long, highly informative piece of intellectual biography that forms the introduction to *Center and Periphery* he describes at one point (p. xxviii) how in 1953 he began to revise a work on one of his abiding interests—that of "primary groups"—and how it turned into

> "an almost wholly new manuscript of about three hundred thousand words. I called it 'Love, Belief, and Civility'. . . . The manuscript covered a tremendous range of subjects from religion and politics to intimate personal relationships. I was not at all satisfied with it and I am still not satisfied with it. That is why it is still unpublished."

One of the matters to which he was then to be diverted was his book *The Torment of Secrecy* (1956)—which was at once an essay on "civil politics" and a luminous reply to the McCarthyist assaults on the foundations of civility.

IT IS A LONG TIME since those days. But the purpose of the unfinished business remains both scholarly and, in the frankest sense, political. Social scientists often agonise over the distinction between thought and action—and Shils himself writes often about the dilemmas they face. Yet few can doubt that for Shils sociological thought has a profoundly public and inevitably political bearing. He has had a long-standing interest in the analysis of ideologies—and at one period (in the mid-1950s) he felt, as others did, that once-powerful forms had been discredited, though not entirely exhausted. To the study of those ideologies he brought a persistent scepticism and a sense of moral outrage that have stood the test of time—though, naturally, the objects of his scepticism have felt wounded by his rugged and persistent attention. They have not been able (they have tried) to brand him as an ideologist in disguise, even though they have sought, absurdly, to describe the critique of Nazism and Stalinism as itself a parallel ideology to those monuments of moral and intellectual brutality.

Many of his adversaries have been somewhat out of their (and his) depth. For his grasp of the literature of sociology, and much else, is formidable in every sense of that word. That enormous range of perspectives, brochures, and half-formed intimations is not easily or briefly summarised, and Shils' survey of these materials in *The Calling of Sociology* is neither brief nor always easy. It is, however, an excellent guide to what he calls "the confluence of traditions"—especially but not only in American social science.

The content of sociology is, like Shils' own ideas, provisional. Sociology gets its minimal scientific character from such "provisional" contents—not from the resort to quantification (and at times quantophrenia), nor from its preoccupation with fundamental categories. The sociologist, again, must remember the public face of his professional work. That public reference is twofold. Part of the subject's data relates to opinion—to what real people say, believe, hope and fear. Although technical sophistication in survey analysis cannot remove the ambiguities in the interpretation of such

[4] "I used often to talk with [Park], or rather listen to him, but he never mentioned Durkheim or Weber, even though he knew that I was more or less conversant with European sociology. I attended his last lectures at the University of Chicago in the spring of 1934." *The Calling of Sociology*, p.206, fn. 24.

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public "messages", no government—least of all in a democratic society—can long remain aloof from their thrust, even though it can, quite properly, feel obliged in the public interest to act in defiance of what it hears. But the sociologists (and other social scientists) have a public role that goes beyond the elucidation of mass opinion. In so far as they reflect on that role and are not immersed in professional busyness or the pursuit of private ambition, there are, in Shils' account, three broad paths on which they can move.

ONE WAY IS TO ACT as the servants of public policy—combining meliorist aims with technical skills. The immersion of social scientists in public policy research has, in fact, produced a quantity of social data and a sophistication in their analysis on a scale that has not been previously known. This mirrors the outcome of work in the physical and life sciences—which, too, depend upon the State for salaries and equipment. (In another capacity, as long-time editor of *Minerva*, the quarterly "Review of Science, Learning and Policy", Shils has given and sponsored much attention to the problems as well as the intellectual gains that have risen from such dependence—and to the impact of new arrangements upon the institutions and personnel engaged in such sciences.) So far as the social sciences are concerned, Shils warns about the perils of *scientism* and its subtle appeal to its practitioners.

> "The tradition of scientism—which is different from the practice of science—is a tradition of tidiness of planned and ordered progress, of continuous improvement along clearly defined lines. . . . There is nothing in this view of the world which renders it logically compelling to those who practice sociology."

All the same, governments will use "scientistic attitudes" among sociologists to corral them to "the side of the line" that conforms to the whims (or dogmas) of state patronage. And this, may I say, means more often pressure from bureaucrats than from elected politicians—though, of course, it can come from them as well.

A second approach is through opposition to authority—via a tradition or posture of alienation. Intellectuals are prone to see modern society as

> "the theater of a passionate struggle for power . . . saved from absolute chaos by deliberately maintained ignorance and stupefaction, by fear and repression."

Shils astutely notes that in many lands of late the more cunning merchants of alienation come to double as scientistic types as well—swallowing without scruple any public (or private) funds they can get. This helps them to pursue what the Germans have elegantly called "the long march through the institutions" and what, in England, has the homely description of "revolution on the rates." For these opportunistic and parasitic endeavours I have, like him, the liveliest aversion—while I can wonder, more elaborately than Shils, upon their effrontery and reflect, more pessimistically, upon how such a variety of grotesque, thick-skinned intellectual "moles" have been given their scope through the failure of academic and political will.

The third path for social science in its public role is what Shils calls "consensual sociology"—one that neither begins nor ends with social manipulation for worthy or dubious political causes. The word "consensual" in this context is not rigorously defined. But it is not a residual category in simple contrast with the other two lines of work. It means, I think, two things at least. Firstly, it demands "an affinity between the sociologist and his subject matter." Certain insulting possibilities are excluded.

> "The belief that one's subjects are motivated and can only be motivated by the desire to maximise their own income, power and status and cannot be influenced by ideal considerations—that when the latter seem to be present, they are no more than 'false consciousness'—is a block in the path of a realistic understanding of society."

In the second place, it demands a capacity to write intelligibly for the wider public—with a view to acting as one independent influence, among others, on the quality of public (especially educated) opinion. Such sociology does not seem likely to prosper under a tyranny: but where it does exist it raises the public level of debate on serious issues. By the same token such a sociology can, again, have no part in the assertion that real people are in the grip of "false consciousness"—and it is no ally of the arrogant élitism which harmonises technical skills with programmes for the total transformation of the social order.

Shils' contribution to such a sociology must be read for itself. It is inspired by a persistent scrutiny of different types of social bond and by a feel for different kinds of social integration. Much of what he writes is a counterpoint between charisma, consensus, and civility as guides to the discovery of such ties. Civility is

> "the virtue of the citizen, of the man who shares responsibility in his own self-government . . . civility is compatible with other attachments to class, to religion, to profession, but it regulates them out of respect for the common good."

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By 1957 Shils was clear that "the ethos and tone necessary for the maintenance of civil society is seen to be inimical to the fervor and passion of the primary group." It could (perhaps should) be added that the reverse is also true. How Shils arrived at this conclusion is fully explained in another chapter of his intellectual biography—the lecture on "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties."[5] His distinction between these ties is not, in that lecture, always clearly demarcated: there is a visible over-run between the first three. Shils' various researches into political and military primary groups had brought that over-run to his attention, and he sought to clarify it by selective re-reading of the sociological classics and by his own exercise, along with Talcott Parsons, in the classification of "personal" and "collaborative" relations between social actors.

WHAT COMES to the fore is the darker side of many "primordial" attachments—how over-stress on such attachments can lead to highly dangerous excesses of ideological zeal. Yet—this seems to me to be the parallel conclusion—the *personal* attachments within primary groups had not been destroyed by modern industrialism as, in a variety of guises, the theorists of "mass society" (the targets of much sustained and well-informed Shilsian invective) had claimed and continued to claim. In the real world, personal ties are still profoundly operative—they are part of the social cement, along with attachments to "the sacred." "Sacred" denotes an attachment to the centre—the location of a society's beliefs and values. It remains always a matter for enquiry whether such beliefs form a "system"—and how far that "system", or components thereof, reaches out to, or is acceptable to, "the periphery." For in that "periphery" the citizens of a modern society go about their mundane business—preoccupied with their primary networks and immediate obligations.

The bonds of civility, though they have ancient roots, are of more recent origin—they seem to mediate between the abstract content of "the sacred" and the dual pressures of the primordial—the pressures of love and hate, of good and evil. Shils is under no illusion that a society's sacred values radiate consistently into the periphery—even in the "civil" form which those values assume in a modern society. He certainly holds (again unlike the "mass society" men) that in modern society "the periphery" is more closely linked to the centre than in earlier days, as a result of changes in economic interdependence, political arrangement, and new technologies and modes of communication, both physical and symbolic.

[5] See *Center and Periphery*, chapter 6.

I SHALL RETURN TO civility below—and also to consensus. First, albeit in brief, let me discuss Shils' use of "charisma"—a term familiar enough to theologians and to readers of (or about) Max Weber. Shils' original twist lies in his belief that, though dispersed and "routinised", charisma persists as a form of secular legitimation and is therefore a hardier perennial plant than had been supposed. Thus the symbolic meanings (which charisma focuses upon and embodies) are part, if often—to use a favoured adjective of his—an "attenuated" part, of the complex of such affiliations in the wider society. Certain attitudes towards the charismatic centre are clearly more receptive to the growth of civility—and for the political pluralism to which it is linked.

Shils has rightly complained that intellectuals in his country and in our own have been ambivalent or hostile towards the substance upon which it rests. Much of *The Intellectuals and the Powers* is given up to accounts of how the intellectual classes in England and the United States have developed, and of how, in their different cultural and political settings, they have been both attracted to, and repelled from, the centres of authority. Obviously many intellectuals have succumbed to the lure and arrogance of power. They have entered into a symbiosis with the bureaucrats, who, far more than any advertising agent, are adept at manipulating "social needs." In helping (so far as is feasible) to satisfy those needs, intellectuals have devised justifications for all kinds of interventionist egalitarianism. With vaulting ambition, and a dash of populism thrown in, they have paid little attention to what lies at the heart of what Shils calls "charisma"—the allocation of authority and its judicious, tentative, humane penetration of society. They have been obsessed with "social change", into the sources of which they have naively and erroneously claimed special insight. When the Intellectuals come too close to the Powers they can do even more damage to consensus and civility than if they simply stuck to a philosophy of self-righteous alienation.

WHAT THEN is consensus? In *Center and Periphery* Shils gives a long and illuminating account—one that is at times opaque but is refreshingly free from premature closure or jargon. Consensus, of course, does not mean here the "middle ground" of political debate. It is

> "with and about the center of society, i.e. the network of roles and institutions through which sovereign authority is exercised and in which the emblems of the society are embodied and exhibited and from which most of the culture of the society is diffused. Consensus is thus affirmative toward the general shape of the exist-

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ing distribution of values, and toward the institutional system which influences the distribution of values. . . ."

Nothing is here said or pre-empted about the absolute propriety of such values in any large-scale developed society—but it is clear that no such society is devoid of such "macro-social" consensus—even though its influence is, for example, more actively or consciously present in the beliefs of élites (or counter-élites) than it is in those of the citizens at the periphery. The matters to which such affirmations of value relate cannot escape the attention, however intermittent, of any adult "unless he is utterly, catatonically apathetic. . . ."

It should also be clear that the "integration" of society that the consensus affirms is not considered by Shils (or by any sensible person) to be unbroken, uniform, or unchanging. This is abundantly clear from the attention given to dissensus. For "consensus which affirms the center is capable of containing a considerable amount of dissensus with respect to the center on many particular issues." It is perhaps a matter of definition that total dissensus among the citizenry is incompatible with the existence of society: and, in any event, Shils would treat such "total" dissensus as an abstract limited case—no more likely than the alternative of a tranquil, stagnant collection of "totally" consensual individuals. What is claimed is that it is helpful to see modern society as embodying, often in a less than articulate form, sets of principles via which dissensus (real and coherent, even justifiable, though it often is) may be, to use Shils' own term, "contained."

That consensus and dissensus coexist, that the two concepts (and their realities) in some sense also entail each other, seems to me beyond question. No one claims that "the exercise of coercion" is not, in parallel, an ingredient in macro-social order. But Shils holds that such coercion "never operates alone for any length of time. . . . Without a strong consensual reinforcement coercion could in itself never be effective. It is a supplement to consensus, not a mutually exclusive alternative. (The power to coerce is also a generator of consensus.)"

It is, however, obvious that different societies display different mixes—different ways in which coercion supplements consensus. An analysis of those mixes is the promise and conclusion of comparative sociology. Not only does this theme illuminate the difference between the liberal and the totalitarian society—a matter to which Shils, throughout his life, has given consistent and impassioned attention. It also helps to explore the differences that are clearly to be found *within* liberal, pluralist societies. Look, for example, at

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how the coercive powers of the courts have been deployed over the last decade in the USA in the service of an ultra-liberalism.

Coercion is not simply a matter of putting in the troops—often it can be effective by putting in the lawyers! They can then manipulate and reinterpret an opaque consensual matrix. They can turn it on its side if not upon its head in the service of populistic programmes and in alliance with politicians who see pay-dirt or pay-votes in the élitist promulgation of "emancipatory social changes." To this part of the recent history of the United States, Edward Shils and many other still lucid American thinkers have given much attention. For this, of course, they have been dubbed "neo-conservatives"—a label which, in the circles of radical chic, and their unkempt hangers-on, is not intended as a term of praise.

SHILS HAS LONG BEEN a proponent of civility and of civil politics as a trademark of a liberal pluralism. I have mentioned earlier his book on *The Torment of Secrecy* in which he showed what can happen to civility when it is undermined by populist political ambitions. Those who believe that to advocate a consensual approach is to become a sycophantic "celebrator" of every *status quo* should read what he wrote in that work.

> "The pluralistic society, with its respect for corporate privacy and the autonomy of the spheres and its requirement of the plural attachments of the sense of communal affinity, obviously has no place for a uniformizing and total loyalty to the symbols, standards and rulers of one particular sphere. Hyperpatriotism is an aberration in a pluralistic society. It is contrary to its nature and noxious to its functioning."

More recently[6] he has described civility as a virtue,

> "because it permits a variety of substantive interests and ideals or virtues to be cultivated and because it attempts to keep a balance among the parties to a conflict by an example and an insistence on self-restraint. It is a restraint on the passions with which interests and ideals are pursued."

In this passage—as in the essay on "Ideology and Civility", first published in 1958—he urges an austere programme of self-restraint. He was not to foresee in the mid-1950s that, via national traumas that could not be imagined in the America of those days, there would arise fresh encroachments upon civility, not now out of hyperpatriotism[7] but from the encroachments of an antinomian culture and the intrusive watchmen of the collectivist state.

Twice in 1980[8] Shils came to comment on the injuries to civility that attend "the belief in the omnicompetent, omniprovident government" that has in the United States taken "the form of collectivistic liberalism." In Western countries since 1945 that programme of belief has been accompanied by

> "emancipationism, anti-patriotism, egalitarianism, populism, scientism and ecclesiastical abdication. . . . These . . . beliefs are not universally shared in any one of these countries but they are very influential on the public scene and they are very influential the nearer they come to the intellectual and political centres of society."

A liberalism of restraints has turned into a self-confident pursuit of progressive ideals, and those ideals are geared to canons of political and aesthetic "emancipation" that derogate from authority wherever it is located.

This new sensibility—and the ultra-egalitarianism into and out of which it swims—nowhere arose from the known discomforts or dissatisfactions of "the masses." Nor does it answer to the felt needs and wants of most citizens in either of the two countries in which Shils lives, or in the smaller Western democracies (like Holland or Denmark) where it has also taken root. It is an intellectual concoction brewed by vocal academics and publicists with a little help from their friends in the "capitalist" world of publishing and the media. They have no problems in diffusing their ideas and, at the same time, claiming in indignation that their views receive inadequate public attention. . . .

THE SEMI-INTELLECTUAL classes are more often recipients than authors of the messages: but, through their training in universities and colleges, they are exposed to these ideas—and absorb them very readily either because they lack (or have been deprived of) the skills of discriminatory judgment or because they see in them a mode of explaining their own perfectly human inadequacies and frustrations. The facts of scarcity—of real resources in a competitive world and of what the late Fred Hirsch called "positional statuses" in any one society—can be both focus and source of a gnawing and unbearable frustration. It is tempting for the half-educated (often, alas, themselves charged with the education of others) to seek solace

[6] Observations on Some Tribulations of Civility", *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (1980), p. 529.

[7] In Western Europe too it would be hard in 1981 to detect signs of hyperpatriotism. Even *ordinary* patriotism is a rare and tender plant among the intellectual classes.

[8] See the article cited in footnote 6, and also Shils' contribution to the *Commentary* symposium on "Liberalism and the Jews" (January, 1980).

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in a doctrine that subverts the canons of restraint and civility. They also see merit in bureaucratic institutions that promise "redistribution", "affirmative action", and other nostrums.

The uncertainties and absurdities which some programmes of emancipation promote are often fit for (and seem to have escaped from) Peter Simple's famous satirical column in the London *Daily Telegraph*. The offence they cause to more conventional and workable forms of life is, of course, deliberate and unapologetic. Their exponents seem unaware that their offensives may engender bafflement and outrage, and that upon such outrage a new authoritarian spirit and practice can gain ready sustenance. Nor do the advocates of "collectivistic liberalism" fully understand that the demands made by their social enthusiasms on the organs of the state may, in so far as they are feasible and taken seriously, overload the resources and capacity of government. Nor do they worry over-much that the failure of governments to perform tasks assigned to them can come to discredit yet further the legitimacy of government itself.

This has developed in the perfectly proper pursuit of "citizenship" *rights*—but where the *obligations* of civility have been quietly or subtly side-stepped. Are not, as I write, British "Civil" Servants on strike? And do the noisy proponents of the "equalising" ethos understand what Ralf Dahrendorf had in mind when, in his *Unservile State Paper* (No. 25) "After Social Democracy", he asked:

> "Are there not limits to equality? Is it not conceivable that above a certain level of general citizenship there are bound to be relative differences at least in a free society?"

SO EDWARD SHILS' WORK takes on a certain poignancy as well as relevance. My darker premonition sometimes is that, unless the active centre holds (and before it can hold it will need a new, almost incredible access of self-confidence), we may live to witness the erosion of civility and the eclipse of civil politics. But to be confident of that outcome would be the latest—and conceivably the last—great *trahison des clercs*.

No News is Bad News

Media Policy—By JEREMY TUNSTALL

JUST AS THERE IS ALWAYS a "New Journalism", so also perhaps there is always a "media crisis." Certainly the media in Western countries at present seem to be powerfully assailed from several different directions. There are several related technological revolutions in the press, in television and in various post-TV media; there is a crisis of cost resulting from oil price rises which impinge especially severely on a range of media materials from film to newsprint. In several countries there seems to be an increasing political polarisation affecting the media both from within and from without; this is exacerbated by a rash of spectacular newspaper purchases in several Western nations—a trend which is countered by increasingly militant media trade unions, some fighting for their jobs, others demanding communicator freedom in face of "media monopoly." There are further conflicts between governments and the media, with politicians becoming more and more frightened by the apparently ever-increasing power of the media, while on the media side there is a post-Watergate tendency to regard governments, civil servants, and the courts as dedicated to media suppression.

On all sides it seems to be agreed that media freedom, access to information, and independent journalism lie at the very core of Western democratic politics and life; and yet there is very little agreement as to the definition of media freedom. It is widely agreed that *competition* and *independence* from government are central; but it is seldom explained how this is compatible with the major media forms prevalent throughout so much of the Western world—local press *monopoly*, and nationally networked and *government-regulated* television.

A whole series of international media developments now raises new questions—and the possible importing of foreign television signals direct into domestic television receivers is only one of the more dramatic. Such developments are increasingly drawing governments into media diplomacy and international media regulation; and this in turn becomes another factor adding to the growing salience of media policy questions in domestic politics.

Communications policy has thus already become a major field in the political arena; but it has not yet penetrated far into the fields of

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academic research or book publishing. And sociology, like academic political science, has so far had little to say about mass media policy.

KEEPING PACE WITH THE NEW TELEVISION,[1] by Sheila Mahony and her colleagues, and Anthony Smith's *Goodbye Gutenberg*[2] are two books which—if read together—give an excellent overview of the interlinked technological revolutions of video and print in the United States.

Mahony has a very distinct policy purpose, since the book is closely linked to the Carnegie Commission's report on public broadcasting—*A Public Trust* (1979). The present volume keeps the goal of an improved public broadcasting system always in focus; policy implications for P.B.S. are appended to each of five chapters dealing with specific aspects of new media—domestic satellite communication, cable, pay television, home video, and videotext. The book covers these rapidly changing fields to the end of 1979 and is one of several such useful summaries available; the conclusions about P.B.S. are inevitably more controversial. My own view is that the expansionist plan described here was even before the Reagan election somewhat unrealistic politically—since the trend of opinion in the Congress and in the Federal Communications Commission has been in effect to substitute "deregulation" for the previous favourite, P.B.S., as a way of counterbalancing the networks.

Anthony Smith's book, subtitled "The Newspaper Revolution of the 1980s", is the best he has written since he retired from his successful career as a TV producer to become a one-man book factory (he re-emerged in 1979 to become Director of the British Film Institute). For anyone who wants to learn about the electronic revolution in American newspapers, there is no other single book which covers the ground so well. His book contains enough detail to satisfy many professionals of print and journalism and yet is clearly enough written to be suitable for absolute beginners. With occasional glances at Europe and Japan, Smith focuses mainly on national trends in the American newspaper industry of the 1970s with case-studies detailing how several famous metropolitan dailies are solving their particular problems.

Smith is good on the detail of presses, the use of computers, the suburbanisation of the market, the segmentation and consumer sectionalisation of the daily paper, the trend to chain concentration, and—last but not least—the partial, but not total, defeat of the printing trade unions in the United States. In handling the possible merging of electronic printing into "pure" electronic media fields such as videotext, Smith is again strong on detail, often vivid in explanation, usually cautious as to outcome.

Goodbye Gutenberg, however, has some blemishes—including, despite handsome production, many printing errors. The author has relied too much on the American Newspaper Publishers' Association and upon the very large metropolitan dailies like the *Washington Post*; within the latter he relies perhaps too heavily on documentation supplied by management. He makes several factual errors, for example, about the *Los Angeles Times* and its current competitive relationship to the *Herald Examiner*. The electronic revolution is, I believe, better explained in terms of smaller American dailies; the equipment was initially aimed at smaller dailies because there were more of them, and their smaller print runs both offered less technical challenges and promised bigger percentage cost savings. Smith does discuss small dailies, but by focusing on the more dramatic cases of the big dailies I think he has underplayed several factors: the key parts played by news agencies (and pre-set copy), the centrality of advertising finance (with the biggest savings in the multiple insertion of classifieds), and the threat of cable to classifieds-in-print.

AN APPROACH much more characteristic of British sociologists' interests in the media is Roger Silverstone's *The Message of Television*.[3] More than half the book consists of an overview of structuralism, semiology, and French film theory. Backed by a lengthy bibliography, the author leads us past such familiar names as Lévi-Strauss, Saussure, Barthes, Metz, and Eco; there is a supporting team of prominent anthropologists from Durkheim and Malinowski to Goody and Leach, plus guest-star appearances by Eliade, Greimas, Kirk, Propp and Todorov. In what is left of the book we at last arrive in front of the television screen—or rather an analysis of a 13-part drama series, *Intimate Strangers*, made for London Weekend Television and transmitted in 1974. This latter may have been a reasonable choice in 1974, but those of us who did not see this seven-year-old series are still unable to say whether the analysis adds anything to the commonsense insights of any intelligent person. The author has worked in television for four years and I would have preferred to see more evidence of that experience in his book.

While the British are still enthralled with the French ideas of a generation earlier, several French

[1] *Keeping Pace with the New Television*. By SHEILA MAHONY, NICK DEMARTINO and ROBERT STENGEL. Carnegie Corporation of New York, by VNU Books International (101 College Road, Princeton, N.J. 08540), No price indicated.

[2] *Goodbye Gutenberg: The Newspaper Revolution of the 1980s*. By ANTHONY SMITH. Oxford University Press, $16.95, £8.50.

[3] *The Message of Television*. By ROGER SILVERSTONE. Heinemann Educational, £14.50.

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authors in *The Myths of Information*,[4] although looking still further back to the Frankfurt School, also concentrate their gaze on Toronto (Marshall McLuhan) and the Milwaukee campus of the University of Wisconsin. This book illustrates once again that not only "Communication" but also "Information" and "Technology" can mean almost anything in the context of a multi-disciplinary international conference.

More Bad News weighs in at 483 pages and £17.50,[5] a massive sequel to *Bad News* (1976); the latter is a more important volume and fortuitously has just become available in paperback.[6] Since *More Bad News* is written mainly for specialists, and in some respects is not much more than a set of appendices to the first volume, I will confine my comments mainly to *Bad News*. Based on an analysis of all industrial relations news on all television news bulletins on all three British national channels during the first 22 weeks of 1975, *Bad News* concludes that television news is deeply biased against trade unions. For example, the number one cause of Britain's economic ills was said by TV news to be inflation, and the number one cause of inflation was said to be trade unions' excessive demands. According to these authors, TV news was not only *quantitatively* biased against unions—giving excessive coverage to strikes and other bad news—but it was also *qualitatively* biased. While unofficial strikers appear as belligerent, inarticulate, and inaudible, management appears as reasonable, articulate, and audible.

Bad News has been praised by many British trade unionists, by Mr Tony Benn, by sociologists, and by some left-wing journalists. It has been condemned by senior news executives, by journalists, and also by some sociologists. In my view *Bad News* represents almost an encyclopaedia of research virtues as well as research vices. It will certainly remain a classic text in the history of attempts to analyse the content of video news, and the extraordinarily difficult problems are attacked with admirable gusto and sophistication. However, the study has the crucial fault of being too *narrow*—in its definition of industrial relations news, in its lack of comparison either with similar press news or with other television news, and in its general lack of sympathy for the problems,

[4] *The Myths of Information: Technology and Post-Industrial Culture*. Edited by KATHLEEN WOODWARD. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £8.95.

[5] *More Bad News*. By GLASGOW UNIVERSITY MEDIA GROUP. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £17.50.

[6] *Bad News*. By GLASGOW UNIVERSITY MEDIA GROUP. Routledge & Kegan Paul, paper £5.95.

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objectives and personnel involved in daily news, broadcast or printed. It fails to consider the point that trade-union leaders, who are themselves very fairly covered, want "extra fair" treatment because they claim to represent so many people and because big business gets such treatment in another medium (the financial pages of the serious newspapers where "sheltered" space is acquired via advertising).

Any piece of empirical research in sociology has severe problems of a practical kind. This study, I believe, was blown off course by several connected problems and errors: *1*. Eight Glasgow-based authors wrote *Bad News* after two years battling with many unfamiliar tasks—too many cooks for such an untried enterprise. *2*. The sampled 22 weeks of news were too brief, not in fact even typical of the whole year of 1975. *3*. The study was written up with excessive speed, partly in a vain attempt to influence the Annan Committee on Broadcasting. *4*. The researchers ran into many difficulties with their video recording hardware. *5*. Virtually each chapter is written by a different author, which makes for much inconsistency and muddle. *6*. While the study is strong in both theory and empirical research methods, the two do not gel, and both have to contend with too much needless detail about camera moves and the like. *7*. As with many studies, the early planning was botched, and there was no adequate testing of the many novel research procedures.

A more general weakness of *Bad News* is the prevailing atmosphere of ill-humour and arrogance towards all. This is sad, because there are some real weaknesses in television news coverage in this area. Predictably, the only noticeable result of this study has been to confirm television news executives in their belief that the bias and unfairness lies not with themselves but with their critics.

CONTENT ANALYSIS—quantitative or literary—is not the sum of British media sociology. A wider sampling of the latter is provided by the Sociological Review Monograph on *The Sociology of Journalism and the Press*,[7] a volume in which—as the author of one article—I must declare an interest. The collection overall—while still highly critical, often Marxist, and little concerned with policy—is more generous in tone and more open-minded than *Bad News*. Graham Murdock engages in a "sociometrics of capital" approach to interlocking directorships and the like within the ownership structure of the British press; the emphasis on ownership is a useful one, although too much reliance on biographical reference-book material can lead to some invalid conclusions.

In the same volume Charles Tremayne presents a useful study about press management, and Philip Elliott discusses ritual elements in press accounts of terrorism. Philip Schlesinger discusses his lengthy courtship of the BBC news executives who eventually allowed him extended access to BBC newsrooms; although the resulting book, *Putting "Reality" Together: BBC News* (1978), was received with less than complete satisfaction within the BBC, the overall impression given by this article is that both the BBC executives and the researcher acted like more-or-less reasonable men.

Harry Christian (the editor of this volume) contributes an excellent account of another courtship—that between the NUJ and the IOJ. Christian shows that while the National Union of Journalists has always been a trade union which contained a "professional" element, the "professionally" oriented Institute of Journalists has always contained a trade union element. This story, I believe, has much importance for the future; the NUJ—despite much internal turbulence—is the most powerful journalists' organisation in the Western world. In contrast to other comparable countries, which either have several such unions or one weak union, Britain has evolved a trade union to which some 90% of all journalists (plus others) belong. Since even in Britain journalists must eventually keyboard their own copy into the computer, the prospect is of a single journalists' union which will be willing and able to pull the plug on the entire press and much of broadcast news as well. But since there is no future policy thinking about the press either in Fleet Street or in Westminster, nobody—not even the union itself—seems much interested in the NUJ's potent future.

Oliver Boyd-Barrett's contribution to *The Sociology of Journalism and the Press* is a deftly authoritative account of Britain's peculiar arrangements for journalism training. While the captains of the press industry still talk generally about the profession of journalism, and while all of us accord journalism a central place in democratic theory, training for journalism in Britain has rested in recent years largely in the hands of the National Council for the Training of Journalists and the Printing and Publishing Industry Training Board. This training programme achieves only very low levels of practical performance, while its academic level is equally low. Of the two organisations the PPITB has in recent years exerted the main control; Boyd-Barrett points out that the British editors—who in other contexts proclaim their undying independence of unions, government and employers—in this crucial area have been meekly

[7] *The Sociology of Journalism and the Press*. Edited by HARRY CHRISTIAN. Sociological Review Monograph No. 29. University of Keele, £14.00, paper £7.90; (US distributor Rowman and Littlefield, Totowa, NJ 07512), $40.00, paper $22.00.

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prepared to leave the main initiative with a statutory body, which has a profit-and-loss view of training.

These NCTJ and PPITB shoestring arrangements for journalism training seem quite simply inadequate for an occupation of this importance, and illustrate the general short-sightedness of press leadership in Britain. Inadequate training arrangements confirm young journalists in an NUJ view of the world, and store up future trouble for press owners.

PRESS AND BROADCASTING HISTORY might sound like areas in which the British would excel. But with a few solid exceptions—notably Asa Briggs' multi-volume broadcasting history—these areas have been neglected by both academics and the media industry. The field has been left largely to journalists writing either their nostalgic and anecdotal memoirs or rather fulsome accounts of the exploits of Great Editors or Famous Newspapers. Hugh Cudlipp has been one of the best exponents of this latter kind of history; the view which the world currently has of the *Daily Mirror*'s history is one largely shaped by Cudlipp's own forceful writing. His new book, *The Prerogative of the Harlot*,[8] is an account of five press barons—Hearst, Northcliffe and his brother Rothermere, Luce and Beaverbrook. His account of Beaverbrook is perhaps the best shortish piece on that subject, but overall these portraits are mainly competent digests of existing biographies.

Their neglect of press history—especially compared with the BBC's astute choice of Lord Briggs—is yet another error of the leaders of Britain's press. They have left the field wide open to a new breed of young Marxist press historians, who are currently rewriting the entire history of the British press—dynamiting ancient myths (and inventing new ones) as they go.

James Curran and Jean Seaton have written in *Power Without Responsibility*[9] what is likely to be the most influential single example of this new Marxist media history—influential partly because it is published in a cheap Fontana paperback, partly because it fits the market (including young radical journalists and producers), and partly because it is quite well done. James Curran, who teaches Communications at the Polytechnic of Central London, has a unique knowledge of one particular source of data—the readership survey research which Fleet Street has been doing since

[8] *The Prerogative of the Harlot: Press Barons and Power*. By HUGH CUDLIPP. The Bodley Head, £8.50.

[9] *Power Without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain*. By JAMES CURRAN and JEAN SEATON. Fontana, £2.95.

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the 1920s. Jean Seaton teaches Sociology at another London Polytechnic (South Bank) and is another serious scholar—in her case of broadcasting history. No secondary sources for these two. Both are primary source professionals, and also write at least as well as Hugh Cudlipp.

Curran and Seaton focus mainly on recent history, broadly from 1920 to 1970 with a heavy focus on the 1940s; both give great weight to the era of government regulation during and after 1939–45. They dismiss quite a number of popular myths, and paint the British media in a remarkably chilling light.

MANY STUDENTS and young people in and around the British media will make *Power Without Responsibility* into a new orthodoxy, but I find it disappointing in several ways. Curran's arguments about censorship-via-advertising strike me as a little exaggerated. Seaton dwells overmuch on Churchill's inclinations towards stronger censorship; there was, after all, a war on at the time. The analysis is too negative and the brief policy proposals at the end too similar to the unworkable jumble of policies which the Labour Party keeps offering to the British public. Finally, the two authors have really written separate books—Curran one on the press, Seaton another on broadcasting—and the two sections at some points have a Glasgow-style lack of fit. Both authors are talented and knowledgeable enough to have done better.

PAUL LENDVAI'S *The Bureaucracy of Truth*[10] is the work of a *Financial Times* journalist who specialises in eastern Europe. His analysis of the media practices and policies of East European governments is competent if not particularly original—there are several standard American works which cover much the same ground—but he does use his personal experience as a journalist to deploy a strong supply of amusing and relevant anecdotes, on such subjects as the non-coverage of major disasters. As with other authors on this topic, he stresses the great disparities between different European countries. But when he comes to questions of policy, Lendvai—like so many others—reverts to repeating dubious arguments and empty phrases.

Lendvai's book and Hugh Cudlipp's are examples of a relatively rare species—the good book on the media written by a journalist. If academics wrote so many books about Universities these would probably be even worse, but most media books written by journalists are best left unread. Michael Arlen's *Thirty Seconds*[11] falls sadly and all too easily into this latter category. Arlen has served long and well as *The New Yorker*'s television critic and he has certainly written better books than this. *Thirty Seconds* is an extremely tedious account of the making of a single television commercial—part of Bell Telephone's "Reach out, reach out and touch someone" campaign. The book is heavy with tiresome conversation and banal observations about such things as the Bell businessmen's suits in contrast to the ad agency creative guys' jeans and sweaters. Once again, we have a journalist who has no feeling for and no interest in advertising. He would have done better to have reached out and touched something else.

FINALLY, TWO VERY BRIEF DOCUMENTS which actually deal with policy. Trevor Barnes' Fabian tract, *Open Up!*[12] makes the now familiar pleas for a Freedom of Information Act in Britain. *The Portrayal of Violence on Television: BBC and IBA Guildelines*[13] is an interesting example of what may become more common—a booklet jointly published by the BBC and the IBA. The two broadcasting organisations still do not have precisely the same policies, but by publishing the two sets of guidelines alongside each other they emphasise the similarities. In both cases these are indeed broad guidelines—a traditional British approach—rather than very detailed chapter and verse.

Violence is an old and difficult problem—how to protect the young and the old, while not eliminating all of the conflict and violence which drama has always involved. But there are many other policy problems—both newer and more difficult—which confront the media. Neither the media organisations, nor media sociologists, or (in Britain) anyone else is doing or thinking very much about these increasingly complex and numerous problems. This does not mean that the policy problems will go away, merely that the inevitably *ad hoc* policy decisions will be—even more than in the past—replete with unanticipated consequences of many kinds.

[10] *The Bureaucracy of Truth: How Communist Governments Manage the News.* By PAUL LENDVAI. Burnett Books, £6.95; Westview Press, $24.00

[11] *Thirty Seconds.* By MICHAEL J. ARLEN. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $9.95; Faber, £5.50.

[12] *Open Up!: Britain and Freedom of Information in the 1980s.* By TREVOR BARNES. Fabian Tract 467, 65p.

[13] *The Portrayal of Violence on Television: BBC and IBA Guidelines.* Published jointly by the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Independent Broadcasting Authority, free on request.

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The Liberal Mind

Isaiah Berlin's Éloges—By ANTHONY QUINTON

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES ARE ordinarily the work of those who in certain crucial ways are unselfconscious, those who have no doubts about their own importance or interestingness, a state of mind that is the typical outcome of complete absence of a sense of humour. In the greatest autobiographies this is carried to a point of monstrosity, as in the cases of St Augustine and Rousseau, two of the most detestable human beings known to history. Cellini and Gibbon are considerably less awful, but they diffuse a chilling radiation of self-regard.

Memoirs, the record of what the subject observed rather than of what he felt and did, are the appropriate form for less self-worshipping, more self-critical spirits—for, one might say, the Isherwoods of real life, cameras preoccupied with the surrounding scene and not at all disposed to go on about their lenses, focal length, exposure speed and so forth. Being, perhaps, one degree more squeamish and humane than even the memoirists of the world, Sir Isaiah Berlin is not prepared to reveal himself through a continuous account of the interesting people he has encountered. In these *éloges*—one or two of them were, in fact, funeral orations—he and the course of his life are revealed very much *per accidens*. But a good deal is, nevertheless, communicated. His splendidly uncorseted prose is entirely reliable in its promise of pneumatic bliss, that, to be a little more specific, of being taken to its author's heart, of having his inward sentiments made clear.

He has, of course, come across some interesting and important people. But of the two men he writes of in *Personal Impresssions*[1] who would have to be accounted the most important, Roosevelt and Einstein, he never met the former. And one or two of the academic people he writes about are somewhat of the village Hampden order, rescued from oblivion only by the brilliance of his account of them. But even in the grander cases the person taking the impression is as much present to the reader's mind for much of the time as the person giving it. That is in no way due to any deliberate solicitation of the reader's notice. Where he does significantly lapse into the first person singular, Berlin is usually representing himself in a gently unflattering, more or less comical light, as, for example, unable to get a word in edgeways in the presence of some equally voluminous but less companionable talker.

His intellectual vitality and range of reference, together with the copious and glittering prose in which they are so naturally expressed, are part of the reason for the very personal character of these personal impressions. But their author is interestingly distinctive in a cultural as well as an intellectual way. He was born in Latvia (then, as now once again, after two decades of independence, part of the Russian empire) a few years before the war of 1914 and left it for England in 1919 when he was ten. But he has remained, for all the successful part he has played in various rather intensely English institutions, in Oxford and out of it, both Russian and also Russian Jewish.

The Russian aspect of his personality comes out most directly here in the fine concluding essay about meetings with Anna Akhmatova and Boris Pasternak in Russia in 1945 and after. (Its most substantial product is the collection of essays on Russian thinkers which is the first of the series of four volumes of which this is the last.) He could speak their language, he was fully immersed in their literary environment, "The magnificent flowering of Russian poetry which had begun in the 1890s—the bold, creative, numerous, vastly influential experiments in the arts at the beginning of the twentieth century. . . ." But above all he could draw on a whole childhood of accumulated impressions of life in Russia at the time when his two subjects were establishing their literary careers.

At a deeper level Berlin's Russianness expresses itself in an informed concern about English political naivety and in an implied criticism of the element of priggish, pleasure-fearing respectability in English life. Neither of these themes is pursued at all explicitly. Indeed the former theme is only vestigially present, for example in the implied criticism of the kind of wet, *bien pensant* leftism represented by Herbert Read, against whom Berlin defends the prose of Winston Churchill. Churchill's prose, he argues, is the fitting expression of his particular, highly dramatic but nevertheless grown-up conception of the historic strife of nations.

In general, it is not surprising that someone who

[1] *Personal Impression*. By ISAIAH BERLIN. Chatto & Windus, £9.50.

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knew Russia before the deluge and escaped to the shrinking remainder of the civilised world should be anxious about the threat of Asiatic despotism and concerned at the weak recognition of that threat around him among the English, happily at play in their enchanted garden. The overt form this takes is Berlin's continuing project of acquainting the English with traditions of social and political thought which go far beyond the limits set by their codes of acceptable argument and action, particularly in the essays of the third volume of this series, *Against the Current*.

The other side of his Russian background reveals itself in the qualities he singles out for praise in the friends about whom he writes. Of Maurice Bowra he says:

> "All his life he liked freedom, individuality, independence, and detested everything that seemed to him to cramp and constrict the forces of human vitality. . . . He had little sympathy for those who recoiled from the forces of life—cautious, calculating conformists, or those who seemed to him prigs or prudes. . . ."

Reflecting on the influence of a more unlikely friend, Aldous Huxley, he notes particularly his role as an emancipator for young Englishmen in the 1920s and mentions an early friend whose life was in effect transformed by "the earlier, 'cynical', God-denying Huxley, the object of fear and disapproval to parents and schoolmasters." The romantic immoderation and exorbitance of Auberon Herbert is praised for its dissolvent effect on prudent narrow-mindedness. There really is a regular and systematic difference between the attitudes of the Russians and the English to the private behaviour of human beings. Russian parties are feasts in which no thought is taken for the empty larder of tomorrow; greetings and partings are occasions for operatic displays of emotion; in social life time is of no consequence. "I must have a little time on my own" is not a thought that seems naturally to occur to the Russian mind. Berlin joyfully welcomes anything in the nature of the people he has met that tends in the direction of personal abundance and fulfilment and away from the pinched mouths, drily-cleared throats and exact time-tables of English life.

FIVE OF THE FIFTEEN PEOPLE celebrated in the book are Jewish, and the essays on them are in various ways the best, particularly those on Weizmann and Namier. The latter is really the gem of the collection in many ways; it is extremely funny and yet at the same time both affectionate and respectful of Namier's power and distinction of mind. The first president of Israel and the most influential British historian of the 20th century were both Eastern Jews, one from the Russian Empire, the other from the Austrian Empire. It was in this part of the world, that of Berlin's own beginnings, that Zionism was a matter of the utmost, even deadly seriousness and not just a particular variant on the general romantic theme of 19th-century nationalism. The Jews of western Europe could see assimilation as a real possibility. They were comparatively few in number; divisions within Christianity in the countries where they lived left their dissent less exposed; their legal and social disabilities were much attenuated; they were not confined by either to particular occupations to anything like the hostility-exciting extent that the Jews of the Russian Empire were. Both Weizmann and Namier rejected the idea of assimilation.

Berlin's feeling for the world from which they came gives his accounts of Weizmann and Namier a special force. There is a particular intimacy to his understanding of their attitude toward England—a complex amalgam of love, exasperation, wonder, gratitude, disappointment, amusement. Both of them gave long and deep devotion to the idea of England. In the case of the more realistic and practically involved Weizmann, that devotion gave way in the end to a sad sense of betrayal. Namier's more fanciful notion of England had to withstand a series of painful personal rebuffs. They were quite as much a result of his corrugations of temperament as of prejudice, which he was well designed to excite in those he met, even in its most inert and dormant forms.

One thing Berlin picks out as the specifically intellectual strand in Namier's Anglophilia is his endorsement of what he took to be a traditional English distaste for abstract theory. It took

> "a humane, civilised and, above all, sober, undramatised, empirical view of life. Englishmen seemed to him to take account, more than most men, of the real ends of human life—pleasure, justice, power, freedom, glory, the sense of human solidarity which underlay both patriotism and adherence to tradition; above all they loathed abstract principles and general theories."

That accords with his own hostility to all forms of historical determinism, with his conviction that the moving force of history is above all the free and morally assessable choices of individual human beings.

Berlin's more theoretical writings attest to his commitment to liberty as the first, even if as only *primus inter pares*, of political goods. With Namier and Weizmann he sees it as more secure, established and instinctive an element of the social arrangements of England than it is of any other country. At the same time he recognises and deplores the subjective repressions and puritanisms of English life. It could well be argued that the persistence of liberty here is not unconnected with

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private restraint and self-denial. Social mechanisms of control can be dispensed with where people have themselves pretty firmly in hand. Riot police are not needed for the likes of John Stuart Mill. Berlin does not explicitly make this point but it is entirely in keeping with his view that all good things cannot be enjoyed together, that there is no single all-embracing end for mankind.

MUCH OF BERLIN'S SOPHISTICATED and many-sided scheme of opinions and ideals emerges coherently in this book despite the extremely contingent nature of its ingredients, nearly all of which were written in response to invitations. There are three lectures, six contributions to collective volumes of one sort or another, two book reviews and only one item that appears to be self-initiated, the piece on Roosevelt, which powerfully evokes the hopeful exception he constituted, with his unflagging faith in the future, to the generally desperate atmosphere of the 1930s.

Apart from the major political figures and the distinguished Jewish subjects the main concern is with Oxford academics, four of the five being particularly identified with All Souls. Two of these, the historian Richard Pares and the political theorist John Plamenatz, are described as having "moral charm", a real human characteristic which is instantly recognisable even if one has never properly had the thought of it before, let alone adjoined the two words that so neatly indicate it. The account of Plamenatz is perhaps the most delicately perceptive of any in the book. Plamenatz, although descended from a Montenegrin family of politically explosive tradition and, it appears, with a propensity to smuggling, was a gentle, withdrawn, profoundly unemphatic person, happiest in the life of the common room at All Souls when there was an opportunity for him to converse with somebody in French. Plunged into English life at about the same time as Berlin, but when only five, he remained uninsistently foreign. Berlin likens him as "a noble exile" to Conrad, and reveres him in much the way Bertrand Russell did Conrad.

Naturally enough much of the concrete detail of personal reminiscence in these essays is set in Oxford. He is conscious of the limitations of its academic inhabitants. Of the scintillating effect of Judge Felix Frankfurter on it he writes;

> "The mixture of intellectual gaiety and general happiness generated at this and other parties was too uncommon in so artificial an establishment as the University of Oxford—where self-consciousness is the inevitable concomitant of the occupations of its inhabitants—not to stand out, as a peak of human feeling and of academic emancipation."

Of Hubert Henderson, finely described as one who "did not particularly expect or take pleasure in agreement", he says that he "suffered from neither of those two notorious occupational complexes of dons—a repressed yearning for spectacular worldly success and influence, and a resentful *odium academicum* of those who aspire to it."

Berlin's style is a well-known cultural resource. The extravagance of a Russian host is revealed in those great mounds of succulent adjectives, those glittering comparisons with interesting figures from the whole range of European culture. In his conviction of the inexhaustible individuality of each human being he cannot be content with the abstractness of a single comparison or an unqualified characterisation. The conformity between mode of expression and underlying beliefs being expressed that he discerns in Churchill is present in his own case; he practises as a writer the acknowledgment of personal uniqueness that he preaches elsewhere.

THIS FOURTH AND final volume of the series in which Henry Hardy has brought together Isaiah Berlin's hitherto uncollected writings does not contain his most substantial and important works. But it is, perhaps, the most characteristic in its ready and generous admission of the gifts of others, its affectionate sensitivity, its unfailing ability to

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criticise without contempt and to disagree without rancour. It provides an invigorating spectacle of the liberal mind at its most assured and unobstructed, glorying in the variety of human character and achievement which it is the chief purpose of liberalism to applaud and protect.

Breaking the Rules

New Fiction—By ALAN BROWNJOHN

THE RULES ABOUT what constitutes the indispensable essence of a *novel* are cruelly simple, and have not been altered by any of the strange and elaborate guises the form has been given. Write a novel backwards, slice it and shuffle it, have a heavy authorial presence breathe down its neck, print it as lists of its own semi-colons and indefinite articles, call it "a fiction"—it still has to have people, places and plot. And the first of these is plot; because anything happening entails the necessity (such is our anthropomorphising habit) that it is happening to something that resembles people, in something that is very like a place. In other words, you cannot abandon plot and proceed just with either (or even both) of the other two, and still hope to write a novel; but you might just achieve something with plot on its own. Paradoxically, it may be a sign of high skill if you *do* write a very good novel with a minimum of plot (and more of this later, since Marilynne Robinson's first novel is a case in point). But if you write a bad one on that basis it can be a most damaging sign of inexperience, or naivety, or charlatanism, and a lot of academic theorists will like it, provided you have done it in the right way. Now, more than ever, an ability to effect an ingenious concealment of vacuity seems to be the essential prerequisite of the bad novelist with high pretensions.

Which is why so infinitely researched and elaborately unfurled a "fiction" as E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* inspired a fair bit of mistrust. Could it be that underneath it all there was, simply, very little? That a long book with more well-knowns than unknowns may be pyrotechnically dazzling, but doesn't, in the end, tell you more about an era and a place than a novel populated by unknowns, like *A Passage to India*, or uncanny resemblances, like *A Dance to the Music of Time*? Not to mention *Bleak House*, or *Women in Love*, or Angus Wilson's *No Laughing Matter*. But even the sceptics seem to have been held by the *plot* of *Ragtime*; and so they will be with *Loon Lake*,[1] which deserves for several reasons a more level-headed and more generally favourable reception than its immediate predecessor. Two of the reasons are the "serious" one that it comes to grips with its era (the 1930s) in an altogether more subtle and purposeful way, and the mundane one that it is a better story.

Joe Korzeniowski (but we do not know his full name until very late on) jumps a train out of his deprived and submissive existence in Paterson; a nasty place in this novel, but celebrated differently in William Carlos Williams' long poem (and can this choice of a place be coincidence?). "Joe of Paterson" ends up at Loon Lake, a Gatsby paradise carved out of the wild by the wealthy manufacturer F. W. Bennett. There he finds a failed, alcoholic "poet-in-residence", Warren Penfield, who came originally from an evicted miner's family and nurtured the intention of killing Bennett, who owned the mine. Abandoning his scheme of vengeance, Penfield has stayed at Loon Lake, to fall in love with Clara, the girl friend of a union-breaking gangster. Joe of Paterson steals Clara, lives with her in a sleazy apartment in a factory city in Indiana, gets a job in a (Bennett) car plant, is lucky to escape when a union friend is murdered by the company hit-men who have used him—and rises mercurially to realms of unimagined wealth and power.

The narrative of *Loon Lake* is divided between Joe and Penfield. There are flashbacks and delays in this unfolding of the plot, as well as various cryptic interpolations which are only explicable as the pieces of the puzzle are slowly brought together. There are also some scenes of garish viciousness which primarily seem to be there because the ethos of the modern novel appears to stipulate them. Yet the story moves surely and grippingly, out of the depressed childhoods of the two men, into the fiercely-guarded and sinister splendours of Loon Lake, and away again into the industrial badlands. We are always convincingly, and poignantly, connected with the sheer physical detail of this American Thirties world of brute despair and meretricious dreaming.

With Warren Penfield the dream fails because his feeble resolution and slender talent cannot measure up to the moral enormity of the Bennett empire which quietly absorbs him. With Joe the

[1] *Loon Lake*. By E. L. DOCTOROW. Macmillan, £6.95.

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dream is destroyed in its own banal fulfilment. The last computer print-out of Joe's biography is a catalogue of his achievements in the world to which his careless machismo has admitted him: ending with CIA man, company director (Pennsylvania steel and Chilean-American copper), respectable "Trustee of Miss Morris' School for Young Women" and Master of Loon Lake. This is final, and damning, but of course not explained enough: Joe has risen too fast after outwitting the Jacksonstown police when under interrogation for suspected murder. But it is part of Doctorow's skill to make these allegorical wanderings of Warren and Joe part of so vivid a past world that its implied links with the present leave the reader incredulous.

NOTHING IN MARILYNNE ROBINSON'S *Housekeeping*[2] ends so resoundingly, but the climax of this extraordinary first novel surely intends as powerful a message for other kinds of quester after the American dream. Ruth Stone's grandfather from the Middle West yearned for the mountains, and migrated to Fingerbone, a ramshackle community thrown down on the side of a northwestern glacial lake which regularly rises to flood it. The lake claims grandfather at the beginning of the novel, when the train on which he is travelling sheers off the Fingerbone bridge into the waters, leaving no survivors and no traceable remains. And it pulls Ruth's mother to suicide, driving her car off a cliff having left Ruth and her sister Lucille with their surviving grandmother. These incidents happen early, and the rest of the book is "about" no more than the three successive households in which the girls grow from childhood to adolescence in grandfather's self-built, draughty, crooked timber house on its small hill just out of reach of the flood waters.

But *Housekeeping* is concerned with much more than the gentle account of the failure of the family to survive their battle with this insidiously hostile environment. Ruth and Lucille's last guardian, Aunt Sylvie, is given to lonely, eccentric confrontation of the lake, even walking out on to the fateful railway bridge as if she intends to cast herself off it in the manner of her sister. The water unmistakably draws her; and she takes Ruth on a wild expedition to a ruined house some miles along the lake shore where she hopes that the ghosts of its dead children might appear to them. And when Lucille leaves the household for a more stable one (to live, symbolically, with her Home Economics teacher), Sylvie takes Ruth away from prying police and

[2] *Housekeeping*. By MARILYNNE ROBINSON. Faber, £5.25.

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solid citizens into the world of transients and drifters. It is implied that this is perhaps better or at least no worse than the precarious Fingerbone community, where "not a soul there but knew how shallow-rooted it was." At any rate, Sylvie and Ruth's dangerous and triumphant crossing of the lake via the railway bridge on a dark, windy night is a conquest of darkness which all the "housekeeping" has never achieved—an escape to freedom.

There is hardly a "plot" in any conventional (or unconventional) sense in *Housekeeping*. Not much happens, no violent or unexpected action disturbs the weirdly even tenor of the households; and the tale is never less than enthralling. Marilynne Robinson has broken the rules, and succeeded, by doing something quite ordinary: by trusting the lucidity, intelligence, and at times sheer power of her prose. *Housekeeping* is simply one of the best-written novels I have read for a long time, and it's not a matter of acrobatic accomplishment or artificial stylishness. This is a prose which radiates a level perception both of character and of the currents of living in the eerie insecurity of this community. The writer understands profoundly just what is entailed in setting down to endure, perhaps even grow, in such a place (or possibly anywhere). The message of the book is not an easy one to take, if the only alternative to miserable insecurity in one place is cheerful drifting through many others. But I suspect that it will not be Miss Robinson's only note: to achieve something so impressive as *Housekeeping* with a first novel suggests a lot more surprises to come.

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A TITLE LIKE *The Second Coming*[3] makes a fairly ambitious claim, and no one is going to use it without aiming to write a large novel (or a powerful poem). Walker Percy's terrain is the moral desert of a North Carolina township, all golf courses and touristic woodlands, born-again Christians and murky real-estate operators. No wonder that Will Barrett, rich widower and retired Wall Street lawyer, opts out of it into a mental collapse which threatens to carry him away into either the fascinating recesses of his own alarming or seductive memories, or the physical depths of a local cavern from which he challenges God, if he exists, to save him. Allison, on the other hand, thirty years younger and still intrinsically hopeful, is trying to get back, to reconstruct ordinary here-and-now existence for herself after her own severe breakdown. These two (between whom the narrative alternates, as it does in *Loon Lake*) are conceived as complementary: Will's *petit mal* is a falling sickness, but Allison displays much skill in hoisting a gigantic stove to provide heat and water in the deserted greenhouse where she squats, so she is a lifter. *The Second Coming* describes how they find, and save, each other, and incidentally redeem several other characters whom this community has cast as misfits, or failures, or irredeemable geriatrics.

This is a rich, intricate, and skilful book, devastating in its portrait of a community dying of its spiritual complacency and calling it life. And yet there is something strangely inappropriate about its final affirmations (it reaches them after a long journey which sometimes seems overstretched by its philosophical detours). It's as if Will and Allison have inherited the assumptions of the world they have to reject in order to find each other; they are "born again" as much as the unbearable religious (or for that matter, the irreligious). And what they are born again *into* (apart from the salve of each other, which is indeed an oddly moving outcome) is not very clear. What the author affirms may be true, but hidden deeply in the manner of affirming it through Will and Allison is a variety of sheer sentimental hopefulness, the counterpart of the efficient rigour with which he attacks the characters he doesn't like. Clever, tender, and elegant, the novel stops just short of the magisterial quality Walker Percy may have intended.

[3] *The Second Coming*. By WALKER PERCY. Secker & Warburg, £6.95.

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THERE IS A ROUGH, a very rough, similarity between Percy's Allison and Martin Amis's Mary Lamb in *Other People*,[4] since both are intelligent and good-looking girls striving to put together an external world from nothing. But Linwood, North Carolina, is real, something Allison can begin to comprehend and turn to use with rational ingenuity and some stolen dollars. She is more strictly "amnesiac" than Mary, who is a *tabula rasa* indeed, loose in a Hell of a city much like London with no money and no comprehension of what, let alone who, she is. Amis is on record as agreeing that Mary is dead; and she is certainly tied to some terrible wheel of tearaway living and appalling degradation which lands her repeatedly back in a non-world of which she has to make something livable. The "mystery" of the title appears to be no more than the power of her policeman/author to create her, abuse her and send her off yet again on her controlled orbit.

The stages around this circle are sections of a familiar Martin Amis world made more hideously surprising through the eyes of this lamb on the way back to the slaughter. But if "Martianism", as has been pointed out, is an anagram of Martin Amis, then Amis's Martian eye is a more discerning and compassionate eye than has been imagined. "I'm a Mr Saint"? Not quite. But then "I'm art's Amin" would be reckoning without the strong ingredient of sadness in the author's revulsion at the flesh and its pretences. Learning about life is learning how to make people feel bad; is finding that big, impressive places are really tiny; that "those extravagant lovely white creatures" are just clouds; the note each time is one of regret more than nihilism. *Other People* is more sorry than cynical: sad about the alcoholic Bothams who have been housekeepers for Mary's parents, about the jocular, illiterate Russ and the balding Alan, about the hilarious, smashed girls in the Church Army Hostel. Only not sad about the omniscient creator who is impelled to put Mary through these ruthless hoops.

And not convincing about the existence which Mary led before she was deprived of her memory, and was actually the dislikable "Amy Hide." This previous world barely stands up as a feasible existence for the earlier Mary, or Amy, simply because it isn't there sufficiently for the reader to match the innocent Mary with it. By the time Mary reaches the South-East London television centre in search of her past self we already know her too well to believe that she would have held her own with that talking sun-helmet from Current Affairs. But the awful clarity of her vision of the "unforgettable present" is quite enough to make *Other People* a most original and memorable fable for the Eighties.

[4] *Other People: A Mystery Story*. By MARTIN AMIS. Cape, £5.95.

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WITH BERYL BAINBRIDGE'S *Winter Garden*[5] the disorientation happens in a more familiar way. Douglas Ashburner starts in the mainly recognisable world of a Chelsea winter and loses his mental bearings, gradually and ludicrously, on an artists' trip to the Soviet Union. Ashburner is not an artist, just a businessman infatuated with one, the desirable Nina St Clair; so when Nina goes missing presumed sick after one day of the trip, he has more bearings *to* lose. Beryl Bainbridge's famous ability to convert neglected corners of urban living into wicked gothic labyrinths gets ample scope in this guided tour of inscrutable bureaucracy and scary hospitality. The speeding up of the plot into something near to fantasy threatens to leave both the unfortunate Ashburner and the readers the victims of an elaborate cheat; could this web of paranoia possibly be developing in a world that is not real at all when we assumed it was? Luckily the author pulls back, just, from this kind of cop-out, leaving Ashburner on her last page in a credible sort of compromised situation for an innocent abroad. Odder and more alarming things have been known in real life. *Winter Garden* strenuously ramifies its own oddities with the usual Bainbridge pace and weirdness.

IN LADDENHAM, a neat village near the light industrial township of Spelbury in the southern English heartlands, Penelope Lively has set a nicely pertinacious account of the secular assumptions and irrational impulses which govern the way many of us live now. *Judgement Day*[6] centres on the relationship the agnostic Clare Paling forms with a well-meaning and feeble man of God, and his church. The building contains a striking medieval wall-painting which ought to be appreciated, and celebrated. Clare's efforts to restore purpose to her own life (her husband is always away in Brussels, and Laddenham is an unpromising, "muddled" little place for a woman of her intelligence) involve the organisation of a pageant for the Appeal, and bring much closer acquaintance with a representative group of neighbours and villagers. The ostensibly tidy lives of the retired, the respectable burghers, the young marrieds and their children, are more complex and fraught than appears; Clare's motives in seeking to graft her goodwill on to this community are more ambiguous than she realises; and the pageant is doomed to failure when violent forces impinging on village life suddenly erupt to shatter all the good intentions. It might sound like an honourably observant novel written to a formula; but it is much better than that.

It is better than that mainly because its aerial survey of a familiar sector of English existence is done with an almost flawless accuracy, but no inclination to point easy morals. Penelope Lively places every incident scrupulously, arranges the minor faults and decent virtues of her characters in a sequence leading somehow inexorably to frustration and tragedy; and in so doing sorts out ordinary living in the present in England in a way that makes moving sense without thrusting conclusions on the reader. Clare Paling—horrified at the ditching of the Authorised Version by the parson's superiors—has to tell him that words "are all we've got." It is the nearest to a message that *Judgement Day* reaches. But the ending of the novel leaves an unpleasant feeling that even the abiding potency of language is in doubt: Miss Lively's chilling cameo has wider reference than the village green of Laddenham.

SOMEWHERE IN Stanley Middleton's new novel a writer implies that there can be no genuine interest in thrillers because the issues they raise are unimportant. In some twenty novels Middleton has been demonstrating constantly that the important issues are indeed to be found elsewhere, in more ordinary places; and it seems superfluous to do much more than celebrate this palpable and underrated truth when he produces another book as good as most of those that have gone before. Yet the bare bones of the plot of *The Other Side*[7] seem so unlikely to produce the absorbing performance he gives us that it may be worth the risk of labouring the point to state it once more. David Watson tells his wife that he is going to leave her and set up home with a mistress. Three days later, almost before Elizabeth has absorbed the shock and worked out the implications, "This Gill Paige business is off." The rest of the novel is concerned with the business of adjusting to the changed situa-

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[5] *Winter Garden*. By BERYL BAINBRIDGE. Duckworth, £5.95.

[6] *Judgement Day*. By PENELOPE LIVELY. Heinemann, £6.95.

[7] *The Other Side*. By STANLEY MIDDLETON. Hutchinson, £5.95.

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tion created by the chance that David might have gone: a process which gradually draws in Gillian herself, her husband and his parents, her novelist father, and Elizabeth's father-in-law.

The most that happens apart from one (natural) death is that the pattern of relationships between these people shifts, just a little, as their mutual knowledge increases; and the last scene suggests a mending and reconciliation: "A benison fell, would fall again." Yet somehow Middleton manages to convey that almost everything of importance that could happen to people has somehow happened to the Watsons and the Paiges in these few months. They have reached some sort of abyss, and drawn back, for reasons they do not fully understand; and the return is the hardest thing of all to deal with. Elizabeth's confidence is not to be restored easily; but she is unexpectedly diverted into trying to understand, and help, both Gillian and her father, who has his own sense of failure. Middleton assumes the limitless interest of the small eddies and concealed patterns of ordinary living; and among current novelists he is almost unique in his ability to transcribe them. In *The Other Side*, as in *Cold Gradations*, or *Holiday*, or *In a Strange Land*, it is an enlightenment and a pleasure to watch him deftly exposing that "something hidden from us" which decides and shapes human destinies.

AND MORE BRIEFLY, because belatedly: Kingsley Amis's *Collected Short Stories*[8] brings together the services stories from *My Enemy's Enemy*, three other "straightforward" stories, including the entertaining "Dear Illusion", with the fairly frequent Kingsley Amis motif of a false impression gained and later corrected; several sci-fi pieces; and one or two diverting pastiches. The collection doesn't have to have a unity, or a development, and it hasn't got either. Read all at once, which is the wrong way to do it, the stories leave a hit-and-miss impression. The hits are "All the Blood Within Me" (the one about the divergent old "friends" drawn together at a funeral and exposed in their true colours), "Too Much Trouble" (in which you buy your fish at Weybridge and your booze at Ascot because no one can be bothered to bring it any nearer), and "The Darkwater Hall Mystery." They make it seem sad that Amis's stories have not visited him more regularly, more chips fallen "from the novelist's work-bench." Strangely, though, many of them do not have the narrative inevitability and pace of the novels, even within the shorter compass; as if he had always found the marathon easier to cope with than the one hundred yards.

But most of the Amis short stories still seem to pack more substance and point than either Emma Tennant's fey novella *Alice Fell*,[9] or Richard Adams's inflated fable of *The Girl in a Swing*.[10] Alice may be intended to represent something in, or something about, post-Suez England; but cocooned in symbolic balls of wool, or falling into an old air-raid shelter (like Persephone), or eloping with Joe the forester, Alice remains a painfully elusive girl.

Richard Adams's Karin starts more real, and consequently ends as more of a cheat. There is a certain narrative efficiency devoted to the drawn-out story of her marriage to the luckless Alan Desland (and his unfortunate gift of second sight), and there are one or two goodish bits of characterisation. But poor Karin, who has so many ancestors in romantic fiction, could have been polished off at less than novella length; whereas Adams extends her to nearly four hundred pages, including notes.

[8] *Collected Short Stories*. By KINGSLEY AMIS. Hutchinson. £6.95.

[9] *Alice Fell*. By EMMA TENNANT. Cape, £5.50.

[10] *The Girl in a Swing*. By RICHARD ADAMS. Allen Lane, £5.95.

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LETTERS

Lowenthal's "*Détente*"

RICHARD LOWENTHAL defends *Détente* and disagrees with "a majority of contributors to ENCOUNTER" (November 1980). But is he talking about the same thing? As generally used, "*Détente*" is a relationship with basically just two *relata*: on one hand, the US (and maybe its Western European allies, depending on context) and, on the other, the USSR (and maybe its Eastern European satellites). Thus, not just any country can be a party to *Détente*.

Yet when Lowenthal defends the "process" of the "Nixon-Kissinger policy of *Détente*", he lists many nations *other* than the US and the USSR. He speaks of "the return of the Chinese People's Republic ... as a potential balancing factor against Soviet power", of "the ending of the Viet Nam war", of "the breaking away of Egypt from the Soviet sphere of influence", and of "the *Ostverträge* of the Federal Republic of Germany." These events occurred; but what have they to do, in all strictness, with *Détente* (as defined above)? And even if we are generous to Lowenthal and skip the definition in order to seek a casual relationship, it is hard to see how all (any?) of those events are the result of Soviet-American *Détente*.

The war in Viet Nam did not end in 1975 because of what Lowenthal calls "control of their [American and Soviet] conflict by negotiations." Let us call a spade a spade. The war ended because of military victory of North Viet Nam and military collapse of the South. Was the collapse of France in 1940 a case of British-German *Détente*? I honestly do not see how the victory of a Soviet client over an American one (for whatever reasons) could "create a new balance between American and Soviet strength." On the contrary, it created an imbalance in South-east Asia when that Soviet client went on to engulf Laos and Cambodia (not mentioned by Lowenthal).

Undoubtedly, Egypt's break with Russia has aided the US cause in general—but not as a causal result of *Détente* and certainly not in keeping with its definition, but for reasons unique to Sadat, reasons that would have existed even without *Détente*. Likewise, China's balancing against Soviet power is *not* the result of "control of their [American and Soviet] conflict by negotiations", which Lowenthal says is "usually described as *Détente*." That balancing stems from industrialisation and latent Chinese resentment of Russian territorial gains years ago, not from Nixon or Kissinger. Besides, China's continued weakness will prevent it from doing much beyond pinning down Soviet troops on the Eastern front. What balancing can China do in the Middle East? What examples can Lowenthal point to where this "triangular balance" has served to "increase Soviet readiness for substantive and serious negotiations with the West"? This sounds like wishful thinking.

Finally, West Germany's *Ostverträge* is not the result of any "process of restoration" of "the *American* world position" (my italics). A "general expansion of ... personal human relations" is desirable but, just in itself, is too little to be built up to where "the American world position was largely restored." If the 1975 Conference has allowed the West to "calm what had long been a critical danger spot", this is only because Soviet interest has shifted elsewhere now that that Conference virtually ratified their militarily-imposed hegemony over Eastern Europe. Besides, the proximity of *SS-20* missiles makes me fear that the "calm" spot is still very "critical."

GREGORY J. LANNING

Vancouver, B.C.
Canada

MAYBE I condensed my argument excessively, thus opening it to misunderstanding—but surely Mr Lanning has an unusual gift for missing points. I did not call the ending of the Viet Nam War the fruit of "a control of the conflict by negotiations." I spoke explicitly of a defeat, unfortunately disguised; but I also put it in brackets as one of the steps towards restoring the American world position between 1969 and 1973. Further, I did not list the breaking-away of Egypt from the Soviet sphere of influence as an achievement of *Détente*, but as an important step to this restoration of the American world position. The point of my entire paragraph on the Kissinger–Nixon period was the *Détente* was perfectly *compatible* with a policy successfully pursuing that "restoration" by restoring the balance of power.

German *Ostpolitik*, on the other hand, was indeed a central part of *Détente* between the United States and the Soviet Union. None of the German treaties with Russia, Poland, and East Germany could have been ratified in Bonn without the Four-Power Agreement stabilising the situation of Berlin; and the decisive part of the negotiations for that agreement took place not between the four ambassadors in Berlin, but between Kissinger and Dobrynin in Washington. If Mr Lanning thinks that it did little to restore the American world position, I can only say that it may look like that from Vancouver; the change of atmosphere throughout Eastern Europe that was promoted by the treaties which removed the bogey of "German revanchism" was a major achievement.

Finally, the American approach to China was certainly not a *result* of *Détente*, but was skilfully used by Kissinger as a *means* in negotiating with the Soviet Union. Mr Lanning seems to have forgotten that in 1972, Nixon went to Peking before going to Moscow. He can hardly ask for a clearer illustration of the uses of the "triangular balance."

RICHARD LOWENTHAL

West Berlin

D'Espagnat's "New Physics"?

THE MAIN CONCLUSION of "Between Old Physics & New Reality" [ENCOUNTER, January] is in its expression baffling. For Professor Bernard d'Espagnat there tells us that recent developments in physics render

> "unquestionable the existence of a considerable gap between empirical reality—the world of 'phenomena' on which we can react and act—and whatever we may choose to call the 'independently existing reality.' "

What is the contrast which he has in mind?

In the ordinary, everyday sense of the word "experience"—the sense employed, for instance, by those who advertise for persons with experience of cows or of computers—empirical reality consists, and

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necessarily consists, of any and all such independently existing and publicly accessible objects and ongoings. In that interpretation Professor d'Espagnat would have no antitheticals for his gap to be a gap between.

If, alternatively, we construe the words "experience" and "empirical" here in their peculiar philosophical senses—the senses in which statements about the experiences enjoyed or suffered by some subject carry no entailments about any reality existing independently of that subject—then we have to object that a science which appeals to the empirical realities of laboratory experimentation cannot possibly show, or even suggest, either that there are not, or that we do not know that there are, vast quantities and an enormous variety of just such independently existing realities.

What developments in particle physics might and perhaps do show is: not that there is no "independently existing reality"—much less that "the notion of a reality existing independently of man has no meaning whatsoever"—but that there may not be any unobserved and perhaps unobservable realities in terms of which the laboratory phenomena of quantum mechanics are to be explained.

This conclusion is both exciting and important. But it is neither so exciting, nor so important, nor so wide-ranging as the very different conclusion which d'Espagnat would have us draw.

ANTHONY FLEW

Department of Philosophy
Reading University

MY ANSWER is twofold:

1) There is no "d'Espagnat's new physics."

2) Ordinary experience is a set of rules for action which is normally (but conjecturally!) interpreted in terms of an independent reality, the detailed properties of which are all somehow localised. With suitable refinements the old "classical" physics could also be interpreted that way. But we now know for certain that the "new" physics cannot. Thorough investigations confirm the impression thereby given of a gap existing between our usual idea of reality and whatever the "new" basic physics has to say about independent reality (if we decide to retain this concept).

BERNARD D'ESPAGNAT

Laboratoire de Physique Theorique
et Particules Elementaires
Université de Paris-Sud

John Locke's "Propaganda"

IN HIS RECENT review of human right [ENCOUNTER, "The Coming of Leviathan", December 1980], Ferdinand Mount refers to the intellectual stature of Locke's *Two Treatises*.

Was the book a "propaganda windfall" written by a party hack? Maybe so. Locke himself thought otherwise. He meant the book to be taken seriously. In a short essay entitled "Some Thoughts Concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman" (*The Works*, London, 1823, III, 291–300), Locke mentions several books which set forth the principles of "the original of societies, and the rise and extent of political power." These works were: Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book One; Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government*; Paxton's *Treatise of Civil Polity* and a work "lately published" entitled *Two Treatises of Government*.

Written by a hack? Possibly. Used as propaganda? No doubt. Intended as a serious contribution to political thought? Most definitely. Do we not therefore wrong Locke if we refuse to treat him on his own terms?

PETER DALE

Charlottetown, Canada

Thompson, Chalfont & the Bomb

LORD CHALFONT, in his piece on nuclear disarmament (ENCOUNTER, January) makes several acute and cogently phrased observations, particularly with regard to the psychology of strategic parity.

He also uses a number of arguments that are wrong-headed. For example, with reference to the "inconvenient historical fact" of Hiroshima, would he have us believe that, had the Japanese been able to retaliate with nuclear weapons of their own, the Pacific War would have ended in the subdued rattle of small arms? Such historical speculations are hardly sufficient to allay the perfectly reasonable fear that, in a rapidly escalating European war, any enemy might soon feel obliged to knock out Britain's nuclear armoury before it could be used. Nuclear war is indeed a very different matter from conventional war. But, because the planners increasingly see nuclear weaponry as no more than an extension to the conventional arsenal, the example of Hiroshima is rapidly and sadly losing any force it might once have had.

Lord Chalfont continues, ". . . since the British nuclear arsenal is largely submarine based . . . it is . . . invulnerable to a pre-emptive strike directed against the United Kingdom." What sort of smoke-screening is that? Surely he realises that much of CND's current effort is directed against the introduction of land-based cruise missiles? And what of those American missiles sited in the UK that he himself refers to?

What is perhaps more distressing is his use of *ad hominem* arguments to discredit the Disarmament Campaign. To the characterisation of E. P. Thompson and his allies as the harbingers of the Dark Ages of a Marxist Britain, one can only reply that Lord Chalfont cannot have paid very close attention to the writings of a man whose attachment to fundamental British institutions is passionate and unambiguous. His slur on Thompson's military acumen rests on the famous *Panorama* argument over the value of tanks. At the time no doubt many other brows were raised. More recent events on Iranian soil have, if anything, proved Thompson right. Western military observers have (it is widely reported) shown increasing alarm at the ease with which Iran's British-built tanks have been knocked out. Thermal imaging and lasers have done little to save *them*.

Lord Chalfont's attacks on the integrity of other disarmers are little more than abuse, especially the image of the "protagonists of Soviet influence in our society [who] ply their trade in many disguises—teachers, professors etc." This is cheap, and particularly hurtful to the many intelligent, indeed distinguished people who have had to wrestle hard in order to reconcile themselves to the full implications of an anti-nuclear position. If Lord Chalfont really considers their position to be "cosy", perhaps he should talk to a few more. He certainly can't have sampled the heartbreaking business of door-to-door campaigning.

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There are "mindless fanatics" on both sides of the arguments. Does Lord Chalfont feel his own position to be in any way discredited by the antics of the British Movement, or his own opinions irredeemably soiled by the coincidental utterances of Mr Martin Webster?

JONATHAN HUGH-JONES

Finstock, Oxon.

I FIND MR HUGH-JONES's statement that CND's current effort is "directed against the introduction of land-based cruise missiles" somewhat bizarre. If this is really what the members of CND want, they should say so. There is a perfectly respectable and valid argument against land-based Cruise Missiles. Unfortunately it is being confused and weakened by those who are apparently unable to

"A New Beginning. . . ."

A NEW international organisation of writers, scholars, artists, scientists, trade-unionists, and teachers—the Committee for the Free World—was recently launched with simultaneous press conferences in London and New York. The event was widely reported in the European and American press.[1] In its opening declaration the Committee said:

"Our aim is to alter the climate of confusion and complacency, apathy and self-denigration that has done so much to weaken the Western democracies in the face of a growing threat to their continued viability and even their existence as free societies . . . the evident reluctance of Western democracy to undertake with the necessary urgency and vigour an adequate defence of itself is largely due to the pervasive influence of a number of grave misconceptions.

"Although they take a variety of forms, these ideas can be summed up in several propositions which are manifestly untrue: that the political systems of the societies in which we live are founded on the oppression of their own people; that the freedom they claim to offer is a sham; that their prosperity depends on the exploitation and plunder of the "Third World." In many places these propositions have very nearly assumed, consciously or unconsciously, the status of an orthodoxy: in the mass media, in institutions of higher learning, and among intellectuals generally.

"We believe that holding cheap the values, the achievements and the institutions of Western civilisation has led in the past, and may lead again, not to something better but to something immeasurably worse, not to peace but to war; in the generation of the 1930s to totalitarianism of the Right, and in our time to totalitarianism of the Left.

"We are persuaded that the struggle for freedom may in the end be won or lost not on battlefields but in books, newspapers, broadcasts, classrooms, and in all public institutions where the determination to remain free is enhanced or undermined. As members of the international community who acknowledge a particular responsibility in this respect we commit ourselves to this struggle in the world of ideas. Many of us have for some time been trying to discharge this responsibility in our respective countries but with a distressing sense of isolation. . . . We believe that the moment has come for a concerted international effort. In full awareness of the derision to which the term 'the free world' has been subjected in recent years, we declare our conviction that the term signifies a living reality."

[1] See *The Times* (London), 11 and 12 February; *Die Welt* (Bonn), 26 January, 11 and 12 February; *Il Giornale* (Milan), 8 and 11 February; *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 11 February; *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), 23 February; *New York Times*, 23 February.

Among the signatories of the committee's general statement were:

RAYMOND ARON
MILOVAN DJILAS
EUGENE IONESCO
TOM STOPPARD
LORD CHALFONT
SAUL BELLOW
LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI
BRUNO BETTELHEIM
SIR FRED HOYLE
ARTHUR KOESTLER
HUBER MATOS
LEO ROSTEN
BAYARD RUSTIN
ELIE WIESEL

GOLO MANN
EDWARD SHILS
MAURICE CRANSTON
LORD BULLOCK
RENZO DE FELICE
OSCAR HANDLIN
DAN JACOBSON
ELIE KEDOURIE
GEORGE WILL
EDWARD LUTTWAK
MIDGE DECTER
GERD BUCERIUS
HUGH THOMAS
NORMAN PODHORETZ

RICHARD HOGGART
WALTER LAQUEUR
MAX KAMPELMAN
H. R. TREVOR-ROPER
KINGSLEY AMIS
IRVING KRISTOL
JOHANNES GROSS
ROBERT CONQUEST
ERNEST GELLNER
VLADIMIR BUKOVSKY
SIR MAX BELOFF
MAX LERNER
PAUL NITZE
FRANK CHAPPLE

SIDNEY HOOK
JOSEPH BRODSKY
LEO LABEDZ
LANE KIRKLAND
ALAIN BESANÇON
COLIN WELCH
MIKE THOMAS
HELLMUT JAESRICH
RONALD HINGLEY
KINGSLEY AMIS
LUIGI BARZINI
EDWARD CRANKSHAW
LEO CHERNE
JOHN WAIN

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appreciate the difference between arguing against the Trident or Cruise missile systems on the one hand, and advocating unilateral disarmament by this country on the other. I find it difficult to comprehend Mr Hugh-Jones's position on what he calls *ad hominem* arguments. If I read an analysis of Soviet foreign policy, I regard it as reasonably important to know whether its author is the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* or a correspondent of *Tass*. Similarly I believe it important that when Mr E. P. Thompson deploys his arguments for unilateral disarmament those who read them should be aware of the fact that he is, by his own definition, of the Marxist persuasion.

ALUN CHALFONT

House of Lords, London

. . . The Committee for the Free World

THE dramatic beginnings of the 1980s have impressed all observers as having inaugurated—and not merely because of the power-political aggravations in Iran and Afghanistan (and now El Salvador), or the sharp change in the American administration—a new atmosphere in international public affairs. Changes in the "climate of opinion", on both sides of the Atlantic, have been extraordinary. For my own part, I see it as a mixture of a "New Realism", associated with old alarm, fresh concern and surprised insight, together with a "new idealism", fed by the confrontation with major dangers to peace, national independence and human rights. As the launching of this Committee suggests, there is now a radically different basis for rallying the weak, disunited, and irresolute democratic forces in the world.

SOME SEE IT as the result of a decade and more of timidity and wishful thinking; others, as we know, as a sad degeneration of hopes for a stable world order by the onset of new unforeseen troublesome factors. In any event, all perceive the increasingly weakened condition of the so-called pro-Western cause in the world. The excitement among Americans suddenly plunged into a sense of being a "pitiful, helpless giant" (and a lonesome one at that)—the confusion among West Europeans, trapped between a weakened transatlantic loyalty and opportunistic habits of easy compromise—the Afro-Asian search for what might be called a re-aligned non-alignment—all are factors in the awareness of a world-historic change in the balance of forces as the 1980s begin. The dangers of war threaten, as the departing President Carter gravely warned, as never before since the end of World War II. The counter-offensive against civil liberties and human rights rages on in totalitarian and tyrannical societies. The statesmen and the intelligentsia are in a state of upset and alarm. Both are faced with the old formula of challenge: What must be done?

TO EMPHASISE *(as, in my view, the Committee must) the role of ideas and attitudes and information—the professional "taking of positions" among intellectuals, cultural figures, and men of the media—is not to turn away from the profoundly important issues of military and economic policy. "Armaments policy" and "energy programmes" and the like are also the province, if often weak-mindedly, of writers and thinkers. Here one can note that the 1980s have inherited a disastrous state of affairs on "the intellectual front." Provincialism has been on the march. The early post-War efforts to establish a sense of community among libertarians everywhere have dribbled away. In recent crises experts and observers everywhere complained about being "uninformed" and "out-of-touch." All of us over the years have become blinkered by the narrow confines of our local mental horizons.*

THERE HAVE BEEN few enough "grand debates." Contacts across borders and cultures have been reduced to private-touristic affairs or to technical professional concerns. It takes a "genocidal tragedy" involving millions of South-east Asians to break through apathy. Only occasional lone figures like Solzhenitsyn have been able to manage to focus intercontinental attention on certain large issues. Now and then a fringe lobby (e.g., the Club of Rome, the North-South dialogists) succeeds in catching the fancy of the *Zeitgeist*. In the main, few of our societies are aware of the basic discussion and debate which have been conducted on the very same burning issues inflaming them. Frenchmen take up the problem of Russian and East European dissidence with little enough awareness of what Germans, Britons, Italians, not to mention Americans, have been saying. Each in his isolated way contemplates the course of a "resurgent Islam"—or the depredations of International Terrorism, or the enigmas of Youth Violence in city centres—with almost no exchange of ideas. Each remains fixed in certain narrow conceptions of the meaning of "Détente . . . Cold War . . . Development Aid . . . Neo-Colonialism, Left or Right, . . . etc.", without the enlargement of a many-sided international debate and discussion.

I VERY MUCH HOPE *that this Committee will fill the new and pressing need for "constructive controversy", as part and parcel of an enlightened and far-sighted programme of international exchange and "mutual clarification." Not for the purposes of propaganda, nor for the prestige of official establishments. After a bad time of inwardness, isolation, atomisation, intellectuals have to be persuaded to return to the great and open "market-place of ideas."*

M.J.L.

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AUTHORS

Penelope Gilliatt has been film critic for *The Observer in* London and for *The New Yorker*, and has published twelve books, including her award-winning screenplay for *Sunday, Bloody Sunday*. Her most recent novel, *The Cutting Edge*, and her latest collection of stories, *Splendid Lives* (both 1978), are published in the US by Coward McCann and in Britain by Secker & Warburg. She has just completed a three-act play commissioned by the Actors' Studio in New York, and her play *Fred and Arthur* will be broadcast this year by BBC TV.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, born in Warsaw in 1928, emigrated to Canada at the age of ten. He was educated at McGill University and at Harvard, where from 1953–60 he held various posts at the Russian Research Center. In 1962 he became Professor of Public Law and Government at Columbia University, and Director of its Research Institute on Communist Affairs. He was a member of the Department of State's Policy Planning Council from 1966–68 (during LBJ's Presidency), and was appointed Special White House Assistant for National Security from 1977–80 (under President Carter). He is now a Fellow of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University. His books include an authoritative study of *The Soviet Bloc* (n.e. Harvard University Press, 1972), and *Between Two Ages* (Viking, 1970). Among his contributions to ENCOUNTER are "The International and the Planetary" (August 1971), "The Soviet Past and Future" (March 1970), "Peace and Power" (November 1968), and "America in the Technetronic Age" (January 1968). His conversation in this issue was recorded in the White House in January this year, a few days before the Inauguration of President Reagan.

George Urban, academic consultant to RFE, was in 1980 a Visiting Fellow at the Russian Research Center of Harvard University. His widely-acclaimed "interviews in depth" regularly appear in ENCOUNTER, including conversations with Leszek Kolakowski (January 1981), Milovan Djilas (December 1979), Manuel Azcárate (March 1979), Altiero Spinelli (January 1978), George Kennan (September 1976), and Georg Lukács (October 1971). He is the editor of numerous publications, including *Détente* (1976), *Hazards of Learning* (1977), and *Communist Reformation* (1979), all published by Temple Smith. He has just completed work on a symposium on *The Age of Stalin*.

Samuel Brittan is Assistant Editor and principal economic commentator of the *Financial Times*, and the author of *Capitalism and the Permissive Society* (Macmillan, 1973), *The Economic Consequences of Democracy* (Temple Smith, 1977) and *How to End the Monetarist Controversy*, published this spring by the Institute of Economic Affairs. His most recent article in ENCOUNTER was "Hayek, the New Right, and the Crisis of Social Democracy" (January 1980).

Tadeusz Szafar is an historian and journalist who left Poland in 1975. Since 1978 he has been a Visiting Scholar at the Russian Research Center of Harvard University.

Ronald Hayman's *K: A Biography of Kafka* will be published by Weidenfeld in September, and a paperback edition of his *Nietzsche: A Critical Life* will be brought out by Quartet Books this year. He is currently working on a biography of Bertolt Brecht.

Peter Porter's latest book of poems, *English Subtitles*, was published this spring by Oxford University Press.

Fleur Adcock's volumes of poems, *Inner Harbour* and *Scenic Route*, are published respectively by Bloodaxe Books and Oxford University Press.

François Bondy is an editor of the monthly *Schweizer Monatshefte* and of *Die Weltwoche* (Zurich).

Lord Chalfont was Defence Correspondent of *The Times* in London from 1961–64, and Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, from 1964 (when he was created a Life Peer) until 1970. He is a Director of IBM UK Ltd., and Vice-President of the European Atlantic Committee. His most recent article in ENCOUNTER was "Arguing About War and Peace" (January).

Julius Gould is Professor of Sociology at the University of Nottingham. His Comte Memorial Lecture, *The Rational Society*, was published by Athlone Press in 1972 and he was co-editor of *Studies in Jewish Demography: Survey for 1969–71*.

Jeremy Tunstall is Professor of Sociology at City University in London. His books include *The Westminster Lobby Correspondents* (1970), *Journalists at Work* (1971), and *The Media are American* (Constable, and Columbia University Press, 1977). He is joint author of *Media Made in California: Hollywood, Politics and News*, to be published this summer by Oxford University Press, New York.

Anthony Quinton, President of Trinity College, Oxford, is the author of *The Nature of Things* (n.e. Routledge, 1978), *Utilitarian Ethics* (1973), *The Politics of Imperfection* (Faber, 1978), and *Francis Bacon* (1980, Oxford University Press Past Masters series).

Alan Brownjohn's latest book of poems, *A Night in the Gazebo*, was published last year by Secker & Warburg.

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Life & Letters Today

Washington, D.C.

PUBLISHING: A survey of 74 US Federal agencies showed they issued 102,000 publications over 18 months. The *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Publications* listed 66,000 for the same period. One US official's explanation: "The government is putting out printed material faster than it can keep track of it."

US NEWS & WORLD REPORT

London

BOYCOTT: *One thought the Arab boycott was a thing of the past. However, Corgi Books is just beginning to feel the effects of being blacklisted in the Middle East a couple of years ago for publishing in paperback Frederick Forsyth's "The Odessa File."*

A ship-load of assorted Corgi volumes is at the moment on its way back from Kuwait. They were refused entry three weeks ago after reference to the list issued by the League of Arab States Central Office for the Boycotting of Israel in Damascus.

Corgi's, or rather Forsyth's, offence in the eyes of the Arab League is the pro-Israeli undercurrent in "The Odessa File" and the suggestion that certain Arab countries supported the underground German Nazi organisation, "Odessa."

"We argued with them and wrote letters but we could not guarantee to them that we did not trade with any Israeli companies and that none of our employees had Israeli interests", Patrick Newman, chief executive of Corgi, explained this morning.

"This is the first time any direct action had been taken", Newman, who has fired off a letter to the Publishers' Association asking for some diplomatic pressure to be brought on the League, added. The Association, however, is ruminating slowly over the problem.

Curiously enough, Hutchinson, which published the original hardback of the book, is not on the Arab blacklist.

THE NEW STANDARD

Washington, D.C.

CONUNDRUM: Correspondent Henry Stanley, the African explorer of a century ago has been abused more squarely than roundly for saying "Dr Livingstone, I presume?" when I thought he should have said "assume" [William Safire writes].

I have always used "presume" to mean "to go too far," or to take for granted in an unwarranted way. But I am now informed that "presume" can also be synonymous with "assume", as in "the presumption of innocence." When used in this meaning, "presume" is slightly more emphatic than "assume." (I presume my readers understand this; I assume other people may.)

At any rate, here is this conundrum: "What is the question to which 'Dr Livingstone, I presume' is the answer?"

The question: "Dr Presume, what is your first name and middle initial?"

NEW YORK TIMES

Moscow

LYRICAL LITERAL: A Soviet newspaper has called on translators to be more careful in translating lyrics and titles of Western rock music. *Sovetskaya Kultura* said yesterday that a Soviet edition of an album by the West Indian group "Boney M" translated the title of the song *Take the Heat Off Me* as *Divert the Blow From Me*. The translator apparently mistook the word "heat" for "hit."

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

London

PRAWN BRAWN: After months of deliberation Civil Servants have solved that vexing problem—how to tell a prawn from a shrimp.

It seems that some shrimps may have been masquerading as prawns on supermarket freezer shelves. Or perhaps they really were prawns which had never grown up. To end the argument, food experts at the Ministry of Agriculture have standardised the size requirement.

A prawn is a prawn if there are fewer than 180 to a lb. If there are more it's a shrimp.

DAILY MAIL

Oxford

GAIETY OF THE LAITY: *Readers who are sensitive to such things will be pleased to hear that, in a booklet that I have prepared [Dr. R. W. Burchfield, Chief Editor, Oxford English Dictionaries, writes] for the private guidance of BBC radio announcers I have advised them not to pronounce* **deity** *to rhyme with* **laity** *for the present.*

They have also been advised to pronounce the final three syllables of **spontaneity** *and* **homogeneity** *as* **ee-ity** *in the traditional manner. In practice they almost always oblige by doing so. It is well known, though, that many younger people, especially students, now prefer* **ay-ity** *in such words.*

THE TIMES

Washington, D.C.

CAESAR'S WIFE: Aghast and nonplussed, one defender whimpered in print that a man in the position of Attorney-General "must start acting immediately like Caesar's wife."

That displayed an ignorance of Plutarch even more profound than Attorney-General Smith's lack of understanding of the requirements of his office, in consorting with friends of the Mafia. Caesar's wife was Pompeia, who—while participating in a religious ceremony open only to women—was said to have entertained a man named Clodius, her lover. The scandal of sacrilege shook Rome; Clodius escaped conviction in a trial, but Caesar divorced Pompeia, saying "Caesar's wife must be above suspicion."

Thus, "like Caesar's wife" does not mean "above suspicion", unless the speaker is artfully referring to Caesar's next wife, Calpurnia, who knew enough to stay away from orgies with the buddies of Roman gangsters.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

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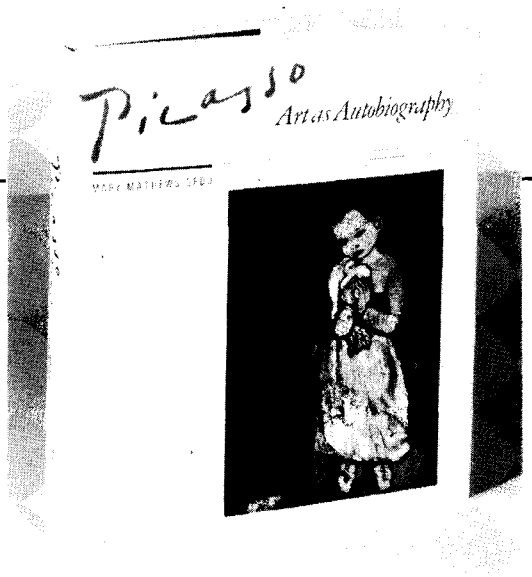

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Mary Mathews Gedo

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—Peter Gay, Yale University. £12.00

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